AN EAST SIDE EPIC

THE LIFE AND WORK OF

MEYER LONDON

BY HARRY ROGOFF

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The Life and Work of

MEYER LONDON

By Harry Rogoff

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AN EAST SIDE EPIC

CHAPTER I

The Old East Side

The East Side of the early nineties of the last century was a haven for the many thousands of East European Jews who flocked there for safety and refuge. They found here indeed a land of freedom, a land of equality. But the price exacted for these blessings was heavy. After only a few weeks the immigrant discovered that he had neither the time nor the energy to enjoy the favors of the Promised Land. The economic struggle sapped his vitality and embittered the life to which he had looked forward with such joyous anticipation on his way over.

Those were the palmy days of the tenement house and the sweat-shop, of the boarder and the cadet, of the white plague and of lung blocks. It was then that the tailor labored a day and a half to complete one day's task, for which he was paid two dollars in wages. It was a time when the East Side was a byword all over the country, a synonym for human degradation and suffering.

The following are extracts from books written by humane observers and social workers of that day:

"In Essex Street, two small rooms in a six-story tenement were made to hold a 'family' of father and mother, twelve children and six boarders. Life here means the hardest kind of work, almost from the cradle. . . . The homes of the Hebrew Quarter are its workshops also. You are made fully aware of it before you have traveled the length of a single block in many of the East Side streets, by the whirr of a thousand sewing machines, worked at high pressure from the earliest dawn until mind and muscle give out together. Every member of the family from the

youngest to the oldest lends a hand, shut in the qualmy rooms where meals are cooked and clothing washed and dried, besides, the livelong day. It is not unusual to find a dozen persons, men, women and children, at work in a single room."*

"The child led me over broken roadways—there was no asphalt, although its use was well established in other parts of the city—over dirty mattresses and heaps of refuse, between tall reeking houses, whose laden fire escapes, useless for their appointed purpose, bulged with household goods of every description. The rain added to the dismal appearance of the streets and to the discomfort of the crowds which thronged them, intensifying the odors which assailed me from every side. . . . Past odorous fish stands—for the streets were a market place, unregulated, unsupervised, unclean—past evil-smelling, uncovered garbage cans; and perhaps worst of all where so many little children played—past the trucks brought down from more fastidious quarters and stalled on these already overcrowded streets, lending themselves inevitably to many forms of indecency. The child led me on to a tenement hallway, across a court where open and unscreened closets were promiscuously used by men and women, up into the rear tenement by slimy steps whose accumulated dirt was augmented that day by the mud of the streets."†

Of course, there were those who rose above conditions and those who conquered them and even those who utilized them. But these fortunate ones were comparatively few, and their number was more than made up in the constantly swelling tide of new immigrants. The typical East Side Jew of that period was either a sweat-shop toiler, a peddler or a small storekeeper. And no matter to which of these categories he belonged, his struggle for existence began before sunrise and continued long after sunset. The East Side had very little sleep and very little rest, and had almost lost the desire for it. An old labor leader tells the story of a worker who was sincerely puzzled by the agitation for an

**How the Other Half Lives,* by Jacob A. Riis.
†*The House on Henry Street,* by Lillian Wald.

eight hour day, wondering what he would do with his time if he were not working all day.

Physical exhaustion was aggravated by moral and spiritual anguish. The old-fashioned religious Jew saw his traditions discarded and even ridiculed. He saw his children drift away from him to pick up strange new ways. Even the more modern and liberal Jew was grieved at the tendency toward assimilation on the part of the younger generation. The safe old mooring of Jewish family life loosened, the privacy of the home was invaded and its sanctity frequently profaned by boarders, the minds of the children were often poisoned against their parents by the ridicule of the gutter and by the ill-digested enlightenment of the school. Numerous reports of young Ghetto girls trapped into vice by the ever-present cadet filled the heart of many a mother with lurking dread. Pious fathers anxiously awaited their sons' coming of age, wondering whether or not they would join the hordes of profane American strayers from ancestral paths.

The poets sang of the people's sorrows and of revolt. The story tellers depicted the little tragedies and comedies of the sweatshops and the tenements. Morris Rosenfeld and Z. Libin, the former a poet, the latter a short story writer, won fame by giving artistic expression to the emotions agitating the soul of the Ghetto Jew. And the creations of these artists are laden with tears and sighs, with grief and distress. *The Pale Operative, The Tear on the Iron, My Little Boy, The Old Tailor*—these are the subjects of Rosenfeld's most popular poems. *Slack Time, A Story of an Old Overcoat, Back to the Dispensary, Poor Tuvya, Mother Dropped*—these are typical titles of Libin's tales.

The surrounding world knew very little of what was really going on in the Ghetto and the Ghetto knew as little of what took place outside its limits. Strange tales of East Side life drifted into the American press, stories of quaint customs, of comic characters and of pathetic struggles. The Ghetto judged America by the ruthlessness of its own employers, the corruption of Tammany and the district leaders who ruled over it, and by such

social institutions as the ever-present saloon, the red-light district and the disreputable dance halls that glared from every street corner. The East Sider very quickly realized that the problems confronting him in his new home were his to solve. He was even impatient of the aid offered him by the older Jewish elements, the German and Spanish Jews.

The situation was chaotic. There was confusion of thought, ideals and practical aspirations. The great bulk of those toiling in the sweat-shops and languishing in the tenements sought material relief. The more energetic and less scrupulous joined the ranks of the exploiters and organized shops of their own in cutthroat competition with existing employers. Some succeeded in fighting their way into professions. Others cut themselves adrift, away from the Ghetto, out of New York and into the surrounding small towns or other American cities. But the vast majority, who possessed none of the good and bad qualities essential to self-advancement, waited for a deliverer to show them the way.

The way of deliverance from shop slavery had been discovered long before. At the time with which we are dealing the workers of America had learned how to organize into unions and how to fight for their rights. But the East Siders came from a land where workers were held in despotic submission, where labor organization was criminal, since it was of necessity part of the political revolt. These immigrants from the Russia of Czarist days needed a voice to arouse them, a practical mind to guide them toward organization.

The task was taken up by the intellectual idealists who began coming into the Ghetto with the first flood of immigration in the early eighties. These intellectuals had been fired with revolutionary zeal in their old homes. There they had been either affiliated, or at least in sympathy with the underground movements against autocracy, where the ideals of Socialism, class consciousness and internationalism were preached. But very few of these idealists possessed a sense of reality. They were dreamers and

enthusiasts who had been fascinated by the drama and romance of the revolutionary heroes and martyrs in Russia and by the splendid vision of a future socialist commonwealth. Of these hopes and dreams they wrote and spoke to the masses.

Unions were organized. But the intellectuals who furnished the necessary spiritual guidance to the masses had their hearts set on revolution and Socialism—so that revolution and Socialism became the animating motives of these organizations. Revolution and Socialism also became the rock on which these organizations broke and foundered. For as long as social revolution was a mere aspiration and Socialism a distant hope, they permitted of conflicting interpretations and speculations—for how is the revolution to be achieved, how is Socialism to be established, and what of the structure of the new order—how and where and by whom will the great change be brought about?

Over all these questions and many others the intellectuals of the East Side were hopelessly divided. There were Socialists and Anarchists, radicals and liberals. Some believed in trade unionism as a makeshift until the coming of the revolution; others condemned it as a mere palliative. Some wanted the unions to be revolutionary organizations, others did not. Each theory had its adherents. The intellectual leaders preached to the masses the virtues of unity, solidarity and brotherhood and at the same moment taught them to divide into groups and engage in bitter factional war with each other.

Thus the early story of the labor movement on the East Side is a tragic tale of internecine struggle, a pitiful tale of abortive effort. Unions were organized to live a day and then to die, and with their disappearance the lot of the workers became harder than before.

CHAPTER II

Meyer London—His Old and New Homes

Into the East Side Meyer London came on October 1, 1891. He was then within two months of his twentieth birthday, having been born on December 29, 1871. He came to join his parents and brothers and sisters who had preceded him to America.

The story of London's family, its vicissitudes in its old home in Russia and its migration to the new land, is typical of the times. The Londons originally lived in the town of Kalvarie in the province of Suvalkie of the old Russian Empire. The father was a Talmudic scholar but "tainted" with new ideas, revolutionary in politics and agnostic in religion. The mother was a devotee of the old faith in which she had been bred in the home of her rabbinical parents. Efraim London, head of the family, wrote for Hebrew journals and preached advanced ideas. Like so many intellectuals of his day and of his land he was a "luft mensch," knowing no trade or profession and having no source of regular income.

For a time he struggled in his native town and then moved into the Ukraine, where he set up as a grain merchant in Zenkov, province of Poltava. The burden of supporting his family continued to press heavily upon his shoulders with no prospect of relief. So he cast his eyes in the direction of the New World, to which ever-increasing numbers of Jews had been migrating since the beginning of the eighties. He left for America in 1888, taking with him his second son, Louis, a lad of thirteen.

Meyer, though the oldest, was left behind. His father intended him for an intellectual career. From childhood Meyer

had leaned that way. He was first sent to a "cheder" where he was taught to read Hebrew, to interpret the Bible and its commentaries, and was advanced to the study of the Talmud. Later he entered the Russian school and started on his secular education. He was a thoughtful student and a voracious reader.

London once summarized the first twenty years of his life in Russia as follows:

"I was born in Russia and lived in the south of Russia until I was twenty years old. My people were students, thinkers; they wanted to know things. My father was educated to be a rabbi, but was a radical and came to America when I was about fifteen, and started a little paper in Yiddish on the East Side. I was left in Russia to go on with my education—literature, history, ancient Hebrew, the Talmud—the usual things for Russian youth of our times. It was not, as you can see, a very practical preparation for the struggle among hard realities. But our people knew only their books and what they held. I was poor, of course. We were all poor together. I was able to keep up my studies by teaching the boys who did not know as much as I did. I belonged to a crowd of young fellows who talked a lot about the revolution and had not the least idea what revolution actually meant. My father in America heard of my inclinations and wrote me that under no condition whatever, under no possible provocation, was I to commit myself on revolutionary matters. I must study, think, observe and wait until I knew very much more about conditions in the world."

When Meyer was twenty, and preparing to take his examination for the eighth grade of the "gymnasium," the London family decided to join the father in New York. Meyer closed his books and followed them.

The home into which they were introduced on coming here was situated on Suffolk Street, in the heart of the East Side. His father had not progressed much materially but he had gone almost to the extreme in his views on social philosophy. He had become a Socialist of the extreme left. In those days the radicals of

the Ghetto had not yet learned to differentiate sharply between Socialism and anarchism. There was confusion in many minds. The intelligentsia, which was almost entirely Russian and revolutionary, lived on its memories and sentiments. They loved to talk revolution and used the forceful language that goes with such talk. They loved to dwell on the heroism of the terrorists in the land of the Czars.

Efraim London was the owner of a small printing shop where Yiddish, Russian and English "jobs" were done. For a short while he published a radical weekly called *Morgenstern*. It was a private undertaking in the interest of the revolutionary cause and its editors and writers belonged to various sections of the radical movement, but the tone of the publication was decidedly anarchistic. Like so much of the radical propaganda of the time it was almost entirely theoretical and unrelated to life.

When young Meyer joined his father here the printing shop was still the mainstay of the family, though the *Morgenstern* had been dead for some time. The London printing shop was also a gathering place of young Jewish radical intellectuals, who came there for the discussions that were more necessary to them than food. Meyer met many of them and thus obtained first-hand information on what the radical movement on the East Side represented, what it was accomplishing and to what it aspired.

Of his early struggles in America Meyer London later said:

"We were poor. My father had only his little hand press, so I cast about to earn money and at the same time to go on with my education. I took pupils, teaching at all sorts of odd hours. Often there would be a class from a little before ten to eleven o'clock at night. Then there would be other pupils until after midnight. I lectured about literature mainly, the revolutionary instincts in Dickens and Carlyle. Then I got a position in a circulating library and as the hours were not long I had time to study law. From the moment I learned English I had been reading everything I could find on English and American history and politics."

The early struggles of young Meyer to gain a material and spiritual foothold in his new home were commonplaces to immigrants of his kind. He worked by day and studied by night. But his many tasks as toiler and student did not interfere with his activity as a radical. He frequented radical meetings and participated in the discussions. In a short time he became conspicuous in the Friday evening debates that were then popular at the Hebrew Institute (as the Educational Alliance was then known). These debates were conducted in English and the subjects discussed were usually current American problems. Meyer London often took the floor and defended radical views in halting English, but what he lacked in form he more than made up in substance. People listened to him attentively. He soon gained distinction as the best debater in the forum.

It was probably his love of debate, combined with his lively interest in public affairs, that made him choose the legal profession for his career. He was admitted to the law school of New York University in 1896. At that time he had a comparatively easy job as investigator for the circulation department of a library, which gave him time to do his college work. During the day he attended to his duties at the library and at night he attended his classes. He was admitted to the bar in 1898.

CHAPTER III

The Early Socialists

The last decade of the nineteenth century was a period of storm and stress in the socialist movement of America. The Socialist Labor Party, the first clear-cut socialist organization in the United States, was torn by internal strife. There was a revolt within the ranks against the autocratic leadership of Daniel De Leon. There were also assaults from without by newly organized socialist groups. De Leon's leadership was dictatorial, fanatical. He preached holy war not only against capitalism, but also against the conservative labor unions. He led a violent crusade against the American Federation of Labor and sought to split the ranks of labor by organizing unions in opposition to the Federation. For a time his ideas and methods prevailed in the party, which consisted largely of foreign workers and intellectuals. They appealed particularly to the Jewish Socialists of the East Side. De Leon surrounded the movement with a halo of conspiratory romanticism. He made it a sacred band which only the faithful could join. The Jewish radicals were unconsciously flattered by the implication that they had a faith superior to that of the American workers, that they were mentally and spiritually higher; were they not Socialists, which the American workers were not?

But a mass movement cannot go on living in the clouds and feeding on illusions. The more practical and the more sensible Socialists demanded that the organization be brought to earth and built upon a foundation in the lives of the American working class. They demanded the end of the bitter assaults on the American Federation of Labor. They demanded the abolition of the dictatorship in the party. They demanded party democracy and intellectual liberty.

The party split in a storm of battle. At the beginning of the breach the opposition was weak. De Leon managed to retain his hold on the machinery of the organization. The opposition thereupon started an independent movement.

But at the very moment that the Socialist Labor Party was breaking up on the issue of De Leon's dictatorship a new socialist movement was rising in the West. Eugene V. Debs, for many years a trusted and successful leader of the railway workers, had made the acquaintance of socialist thought through his studies while serving a jail sentence for disobeying an injunction in the famous Pullman strike of 1894. "I went to jail a trade unionist and came out a Socialist," he declared. He summoned the American workers to organize for independent political action and received a generous response from numerous groups in the West and Middle-West. The party organized under his guidance bore the name of Social Democracy of America.

The Debs organization in its original form presented a difficult problem to the more liberal groups of East Side Socialists who had left the old Socialist Labor Party and were looking for a new home among the American workmen. They were tempted to join it by the fact that the new party sprang from American soil and that its leading spirit was a sincere American labor leader. But on closer observation they decided that the party was a mere conglomeration of radicals with no solid foundation in socialist thought. Among its adherents were Utopian socialists, anarchists and idealists of several other varieties. One of the leading planks in its platform was a call to the workers to colonize a western state and to "capture" its government, thus to establish socialism and furnish an example to the world. Debs' conception of Socialism had not yet crystallized. He was fired by the ideal and was impatient at scientific theories of slow and patient progress.

In the attitude that Meyer London took towards the Debs organization one can discern the faint outline of his future course as a Socialist thinker and leader. He was one of those Socialist

intellectuals who immediately supported the Social Democracy of America. He resigned from the Socialist Labor Party, on whose ticket he had already run for member of the Assembly, and threw himself heart and soul into the work of building up the new Socialist organization. London was fully aware of the deficiencies in Debs' socialist program but he was captivated by the fact that it was a genuine movement of American workers led by an American idealist. He was also attracted by the high character of Debs' leadership, its deep humanness and selflessness. He felt instinctively that more important than the letter is the spirit that animates it.

Together with a few other like-minded spirits London organized Local Number One of the Social Democracy in New York. The Jewish Socialist branches that had been fighting De Leonism and had seceded from the Socialist Labor Party held a convention in the summer of 1897. London came as a delegate to explain to the insurgents the significance of the new party. He proposed that the convention endorse it. A long and heated debate ensued. London emphasized the point that the new party was thoroughly American and this argument finally carried the day. The convention voted to join with Debs and his comrades.

CHAPTER IV

The Socialist David Defies the Tammany Goliath

The earliest political task of the Socialists on the East Side was to battle the power of Tammany Hall. The East Side was the lair of the Tammany Tiger, the home of "Silver Dollar" Smith and of the Sullivan clan. When the Socialists started their first open-air campaign on the East Side, Tammany leaders considered it a huge joke, and assigned the task of disposing of the Socialist nuisance to bands of street urchins. The future sons of the New Tammany attacked the speakers with stones and rotten tomatoes and often forced them to flee.

In the course of years, however, the conflict assumed a more serious and more formidable aspect. The immigrant masses saw their homes polluted by gamblers and cadets, their daughters lured into lives of shame; they saw themselves robbed by cheap little local leaders who grafted on peddlers and extorted money from tenants, and they began to realize that the task of those who wanted a better world was not to dream of revolution in Russia but to fight Tammany Hall in New York.

The Socialists pointed out the connection between corrupt politics and vice and crime. They called upon the citizens of the East Side to drive out the scourge that brought shame and disgrace upon them. The people listened to the compelling arguments and flocked to the banner of the Socialist crusaders. In time the Socialist speakers came to be looked upon as messengers of hope, as harbingers of decency and freedom. It was taken for granted that the Socialists were men of higher moral caliber and loftier motives than the old political leaders.

The Socialists grew in moral strength, in public prestige, but hardly in political power. The Tammany organization saw to

that. During campaign weeks the East Side districts rocked with Socialist agitation. The Socialist candidates were hailed as Messiahs. Their open-air meetings were monster demonstrations of public confidence and affection. The whole city knew it. The press, indifferent as it generally was to Jewish affairs, reported the remarkable Socialist sentiment in the East Side as highly colorful news.

The marvel of the Socialist strength would grow until the day of election. Then during the twelve hours between the opening of the polls and their closing the strength would melt away. On election day the Tammany leaders and their heelers would slink from the corner saloons and the Raines Law hotels, from the gambling houses and the pool parlors, from the red-light districts and the lodging house and get on the job. They would take their stand in front of the voting places and inside them. They would send out squads of sluggers and repeaters and floaters Votes would be bought and paid for in the open market. Stubborn voters and troublesome watchers would be terrorized and beaten up. The police would look on unconcernedly and when necessary lend a helping hand. The count of the ballots would be made under the supervision of carefully trained and instructed gangsters who knew how to mutilate ballots and how to steal ballot boxes.

Each year's campaign ended in heart-breaking disappointment for the Socialists. During the campaign hopes would soar sky high, the public response would be record-breaking and defeat inconceivable. But election night would always tell the same tale of shameful defeat.

The Socialists knew the truth and went on with their fight undiscouraged, not because they expected to break down the powerful Tammany machine but because they knew that in spite of their repeated defeats they were a growing force. The men who represented the East Side districts in the City Hall, in the legislature at Albany and in the House of Representatives at Washington were not sent by the great bulk of the Jewish workers who

dwelt there. Few on the East Side cared to know who their representatives were and what they did or said in their name, but many of them were ever on the alert at the beck and call of the Socialist leaders. Only those public causes received wide support which were sponsored by the Socialists. An appeal for money to help an individual in distress or a worthy public undertaking brought a wide response if made by a Socialist newspaper or a Socialist body.

It was a unique situation. The Socialist Party, a political organization with a strictly materialistic philosophy, had become the moral guide of the masses. This would not have been possible but for the moral and spiritual elevation of the men who preached the socialist gospel. Chief among those who endowed their socialist doctrines with a high moral purpose and ethical dignity was Meyer London.

London was a perennial candidate for office on the Socialist ticket. He first ran for the Assembly in 1896 when still a member of the Socialist Labor Party and he kept it up year after year. Running for office meant just one thing for a Socialist—an opportunity to address crowds on the street corners and preach the philosophy of Socialism. And this London did. But he did it in his own distinctive manner, opening a path into the heart of the audience. "He speaks like a prophet," people said. By this they meant that his words welled up from a heart full of moral indignation against the iniquities of the world around him and with love and pity for those who had fallen victim to these iniquities.

And yet even in those days, when the East Side took tone and color from the hordes of immigrants streaming in, London made his socialist appeal as an American to Americans. He spoke in the English language and based his arguments on current events in the political and industrial life of this country. He never ranted, never clowned, though these methods of speechmaking were then very much in vogue on the East Side and were considered infallible. London spoke on the assumption

that he was addressing men and women of his own mental caliber. He shared his thoughts and emotions with his audience.

London drew his public chiefly from among the younger, the more Americanized and the more thoughtful elements. He also ventured into the outlying sections of the East Side, into those streets where Socialism was taboo and where Jews were treated with hostility. His physical courage was as great as his moral courage. London was the only Jewish Socialist speaker who was accepted and listened to by the Irish and Germans who inhabited these surrounding streets. He spoke their language, he talked to them as an American to Americans and they forgot their prejudices and gave him a hearing.

The older labor and socialist leaders on the East Side considered his presence among them as temporary. It was expected that he would gradually attach himself to the general American movement and go into the non-Jewish sections to live. But he did not. London was drawn more and more into the East Side Socialist and trade union activities. He remained on the East Side because his services were needed there, because his heart was there.

If London had confined his activities to the Socialist movement he probably would have followed the trend away from the East Side. But shortly after he had established himself in practice as an attorney he was called upon to act as legal adviser for Jewish unions and other working class organizations on the East Side. He eagerly responded to the call and thus pledged his whole future to Jewish labor and socialist work. The manner in which he rendered his services made it impossible for him to live away from the section, for London had no existence apart from the movement. He gave to it all of his time, all of his energy, all of his thought—his whole being.

CHAPTER V

London as a Labor Lawyer

After being admitted to the bar, London continued along the same lines of activity as before. He opened an office to practice law, but his practice was intimately connected with the labor movement and was guided by his high concept of Socialist ethics. He specialized in labor cases, representing trade unions, fighting injunctions, defending tenants against avaricious landlords. He was the "poor man's lawyer." It used to be said that he accepted only such cases as did not interfere with his Socialist principles and that he never took a case involving the arrest of a person.

The lawyer who identified himself with the Jewish labor movement in the first decade of the present century had to be prepared to serve to the utmost of his capacity with no thought of remuneration. For this kind of service London was suited by temperament and taste. He cared nothing for worldly goods, for the comforts and pleasures that money could buy. The home where he lived with his wife and daughter was furnished simply. The woman he married, like himself a Russian intellectual, was a dentist and she helped him eke out a modest living by the practice of her profession. She was in complete sympathy with his outlook on life and with the course he pursued. She shared his views and took pride in his idealistic devotion to his principles and beliefs. Her coöperation and sympathy were a constant source of encouragement to him upon the hard road of idealism that he traveled.

A faint conception of what it meant to be a lawyer for Jewish unions in those years can be formed from the following inci-

dent, related by Abraham Rosenberg, an early president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union:

"In the summer of 1908 the Joint Board of the Cloakmakers' Union called a conference to consider the question of a general strike. We invited representatives of the Jewish labor press as well as leaders of the labor movement. Almost all of those present thought our plan impossible. One of them who knew the situation intimately remarked that there was no sense in taking things so hard. If there was no prospect for progress it was best to close up shop. On hearing this some of us wept bitter tears. To give up after we had worked for eighteen years to build up the union! The only one who gave us any encouragement was Meyer London. He took twenty-five dollars from his pocket and handed it to us to pay the rent for a new office."

The Jewish unions of those days were fragile structures, in constant danger of collapse. Of the little army of the faithful who stood guard London was perhaps the most valuable, for he was better equipped for the task than the others. He was an inspiring speaker on the platform, a sage adviser at the council table, an excellent negotiator with the employers, an able pleader and defender in the court room. His advice and service helped in an incalculable degree to keep the unions alive.

It is impossible to recount all that London did in that early period of the Jewish labor movement. Nobody thought of keeping records, London least of all. But any one of the old workers active in the organization of his trade can tell some story of what London did to help in the creation and up-building of his union, and the story is always the same—ready, whole-hearted help, effective labor with no thought of compensation.

Typical of London's activities in those days is the story told by an old member of Local 1, Jewelry Workers' Union.

"It was in 1907; the jewelry workers were endeavoring to rebuild their union, which had been smashed after a long strike

two years before. We were holding mass meetings which were addressed by prominent labor leaders. One of these meetings was addressed by London. It is impossible to give you an idea of how much his speech did for us. He lifted us out of our seats. When he finished, the men rushed to the platform and carried him on their shoulders. When he was about to leave, I, as one of the arrangements committee, offered him the usual speaker's fee—the sum of fifteen dollars. He was outraged. He drew ten dollars from his pocket and said, 'Your union is in ruins. Here is my contribution to help its rebuilding.'"

Then the narrator of the story added:

"Nineteen years later I recalled the incident to London at a dinner of some labor organization. He remarked, 'Friend, we should think only of those things which we are doing now or which we plan to do in the future. Things that happened yesterday I put out of my mind. For if I kept them there, there would be no room left for thought of the present or of the future.'"

Building up unions was only part of the work London was doing for his cause and for humanity in those years. He had many other pressing duties. There was, for instance, the Socialist Party organization and propaganda. London never allowed his labor activities to interfere with his party activities. He was a constant party worker and a frequent candidate. He began running for office in 1896 when he was candidate for the Assembly in the old Fourth Assembly district. He ran again in 1898. In 1904 when the new party that London had helped create felt strong enough to enter the national arena London took the same post again. On the 30th of September of that year we find him addressing a letter to the "Citizens of the Fourth Assembly district," inviting them to a mass meeting, in which he says:

"At this meeting, as the nominee for the Assembly for the Fourth Assembly district I shall discuss the issues of the campaign. If you wish to hear the truth, if you are ready to throw aside

the soul-crushing traditions of the past, if you have the courage to embrace a new political faith if convinced of its soundness—come to hear us and you will pledge to us your coöperation and aid and there shall be heard in the legislative halls in Albany the voice of the true champions of the people, the voice of militant Socialists."

CHAPTER VI

Working for the Russian Revolution

The revolutionary movement in Russia and the persecution of the Jews in that dark land added new tasks to London's manifold duties. In 1903, at the time of the Kishenev massacre, began the period of revolution and blood which was in effect the forerunner of the great eruption of 1917. Following the defeat of the Russian forces in the war with Japan in 1904 and 1905 came the revelation of corruption, treachery and utter inefficiency in the highest places both in the military organization and in the imperial palace. These facts stirred the masses of people to revolutionary thoughts. The underground organizations emerged into the open. The Czar's government at first applied its old method of diverting the minds of the people from their grievances. It raised the cry that the Jews were the source of all their suffering and it organized pogrom squads to incite the ignorant peasants to orgies of massacres and robbery in the Jewish quarters of towns in south Russia. This method of turning the people against the Jews had been employed some twenty years before and had proved effective. So it was used again. The command was given direct from the Czarski Selo.

The Jewish massacres this time did not accomplish what the Czar and his counselors had hoped for. Revolutionary activities did not subside. The revolution grew to menacing proportions. In the Baltic provinces, the home of the oppressed nationalities, the revolution won great victories. There was a general strike on the railroad and the workers under Socialist leadership organized a revolutionary government. The Czar's government was compelled to proclaim a constitution and to organize a Duma.

But the fruits of victory turned to ashes. The Duma was dis-

persed, radical deputies were driven into exile. The Cossacks rose again. The Czar had listened to advisers, changed his mind about a constitution and liberty and had turned back to the old methods of autocracy.

This, in brief, is the story of the unsuccessful revolution of 1905. The pendulum swung both ways for the revolution, but it swung only one way for the Jews. The revolution had its moment of triumph followed by defeat and darkness; the Jews lived through months of horror and bloodshed, followed by despair and fear.

The Jews in America, particularly those of the East Side who had emigrated from Russia and were still bound by ties of family and memory to their old home, were stirred to the depths of their being by the dramatic occurrences in Russia. The events of the Jewish massacres of 1903 and 1904, of the revolution of 1905 and its triumph and defeat in 1906, were followed with bated breath and beating hearts by the East Side. The response to the news of the pogroms was a cry of protest and a call for relief in which all factions and classes united. For a while the East Side Socialists laid aside their cosmopolitanism and came forth to do battle for the Jews as Jews. Later, when the dread of pogroms subsided and the drama of revolution came upon the scene, the Socialist groups were again aroused and vicariously lived through the entire tragedy as it was unrolled before them in the day's news.

With his characteristic vigor and passion London threw himself into this new field of public and revolutionary activities. He instantly became greatly in demand for addressing relief mass meetings called to raise money for the pogrom victims and to gather funds for the revolution. He considered it a privilege to serve in the best way he could. Before long he established a reputation for himself in revolutionary circles as the most effective speaker on the platform. His soul was on fire with the great events in Russia and that fire communicated itself to his audiences.

During those dramatic years a bond of sympathy developed between the Jewish faction of the revolutionary movement in Russia organized in the Bund and the immigrant Jewish workers in this country. This bond grew even more firm and was charged with more passion after the uprising had been drowned in blood and the Bund, together with the other revolutionary movements, had been driven underground. The Bund was now in even greater need of funds than before in order to go on with its work. It needed money for propaganda, for the rescue of the unfortunate comrades who had fallen into the power of the government, for planning and carrying through new revolutionary plans. In the course of time the Bund learned to depend more and more upon their American comrades.

To make the most of American friendship the Bund began sending over its most prominent leaders and heroes as envoys and solicitors. Here they were received with open arms, with affection and admiration and with gifts of much needed money. Their first stop was, of course, New York. Then they proceeded further inland, visiting all the cities and towns that had considerable Jewish communities.

The first of these envoys were Arcady Kremer and Ezra Berg, the former the founder and leader of the organization. They arrived in New York in December, 1903. Upon hearing London address the first mass meeting called on their behalf, they nominated him as the chief pleader for the Bund in this country. They marveled at what they called his "revolutionary intuition," at his power to divine the very soul of the Russian revolution. From that day on London made the work of the Bund his chief interest.

The high tide of popular enthusiasm for the Bund was reached in the spring of 1906, when Gregory Maxim came to New York. His was indeed a name to conjure with. In the stirring days of the previous year he had been at the head of the revolting Baltic provinces. He had led the proletarian battalions and organized the first Baltic Republic, of which he was made president. When the

collapse of the revolution came, Maxim's forces had held out longer than any other. The Czar had placed a price of thirty thousand rubles upon his head, and the Cossacks had done their utmost to earn the reward. By a fortunate combination of circumstances he succeeded in eluding his enemies, though for many months nothing was heard from him and he was given up for dead. Suddenly he made his appearance in China and from there made his way west and brought the cause of the Bund to the United States.

In order to make the most of Maxim's mission here it was essential to give him the proper introduction to the audiences that he was to address and to infuse the gatherings with the spirit of revolutionary ardor in which the Bund was born and had its being. London was entrusted with the task. All this meant not only long months of hard work, necessitating traveling by day and speaking at night, but it likewise involved material sacrifices. Mrs. London, relating the economic hardships of her early married life, said of those Bundist missions:

"When the first of them came Meyer was beginning to do moderately well in his law practice. We were just about to see land. Then at the call of the Bund he dropped everything, closed his office, bade farewell to his clients and plunged into the work of the Russian revolution."

Newspaper accounts of a Maxim meeting in Philadelphia gave much credit to London's tact, earnestness and eloquence. As so often happens, the Philadelphia police decided to watch the meeting lest some of the speakers make anarchistic remarks or speak against the government. A squad of policemen were scattered among the audience. This irritated the audience and was strongly resented by one of the speakers. What occurred then is told in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* of the next day:

"Edward J. Moore [one of the speakers] said, 'In this city before we are permitted to speak we must make an agreement as to what we will say. You know under what a drawback I am speaking. You know what a farce free speech is in this

city. If I dare criticize our national, state or city government I am warned by the police that I will be stopped. You know what the police force is in Russia, but it is no worse than our own. I cannot feel proud of our government when it becomes the co-partner of the Russian Czar.'

"The chairman of the meeting caught a glimpse of Lieutenant Williamson standing in the wings. London realized that the speaker was getting near the danger point and gave him a suggestive glance. Moore dropped his comments on the United States government and wound up his remarks with an arraignment of Russia."

But the chief test of London's powers at this and similar meetings was the collection for the aid of the Bund. The appeal he made on this occasion is described by another of the Philadelphia journals as splendid and successful. The *Inquirer* gives a graphic description of the effect produced by London's words:

"Chairman London then made an appeal for funds with which to aid the struggling Russian revolutionists. The response was remarkable. Shabbily dressed men and women threw five-dollar bills on the platform. From the balcony and gallery handkerchiefs and pocketbooks were showered on the stage. In one torn leather purse were forty-three cents. While the collection was being made the audience chanted 'The Wail,' a weird Russian revolutionary hymn written in a minor key. Nearly five hundred dollars was collected."

Thus did London spend his nights and days in the service of the unions, the Socialist Party, the revolutionary movement in Russia and the relief campaign for the victims of oppression and poverty. He was the lawyer of the poor man, the advocate of the poor union, the poor man's champion. Very truly did an old Jewish journalist who followed his career in those early years write of him at a later date: "Now we have become used to seeing lawyers and spokesmen for trade unions. But in the old days when the unions could not afford to pay thousands of dollars as annual retainers for counsel, the clever man of the

profession held himself aloof from these organizations. Even radical lawyers would make their appearance in union headquarters only on occasions of big strikes when there was an opportunity for making a fee in drawing up the settlement contracts. London put his professional career in jeopardy when he was still a young man and gave himself to the service of the union as agitator, organizer, negotiator with the employers. His devotion to the working man was not mere mouthing; it was deep-seated in the very heart of his being."

The same journalist says further:

"In those days many of the radical attorneys grew wealthy. Some of them made fortunes in real estate speculation. Practical men thought London insane for neglecting his practice for months at a time in order to travel over the country to collect funds for the Bund or to carry on socialist propaganda. They thought him a fool for spending his nights in shabby workers' locals propagating the idea of unionism to cloakmakers, waistmakers, reefermakers, tailors, men of the building trades and so on. So, while many of his friends in the radical movement built for themselves solid material foundations London remained a poor man, earning scarcely enough to support his family."

Perhaps an added reason that London paid so little attention to his law practice was his conviction that the poor man is not protected by the law and is discriminated against in court. This is how he described his profession in a speech in Elizabeth during a campaign:

"A poor man in court has very little chance. Ninety-seven out of one hundred cases are favored opinions. God knows what are the laws. I am a lawyer and I know that law is uncertain and that so are some of the lawyers."

CHAPTER VII

Leading the Armies of Labor to Victory

His most important work in the trade union field London performed in connection with two organizations, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the International Fur Workers' Union. He served them both during their most critical period, when they fought great battles for their very existence. London was there to marshal their forces, to plan their strategy, to assist in obtaining aid and to sustain their morale. And when the battles were over he served as chief spokesman for the workers at the conference table where peace was discussed and terms agreed upon.

In the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union the great strike was the culmination of work that had been carried on for many years. London came into the organization of the cloakmakers at the close of the last century (the cloakmakers, together with the waist and dressmakers, made up most of the International). He was called in to serve as counsel but remained to do "everything else that was necessary," as one of the leaders of the union put it. The union at that time and for the next decade was rather an aspiration than an actuality. A very small proportion of the men in the trade were organized. Shop strikes were frequent, but very little was gained by them. The union was never certain of the membership it carried on its books. There were jealousies and bickerings among the groups engaged in the various processes of the manufacture of the garments. The cutters considered themselves the aristocrats of the trade and held themselves aloof from the operators, the tailors and the pressers. The operators complained that the tailors were

a backward element not doing their share for the organization. Many were the days when the leaders despaired of ever overcoming these obstacles, of ever attaining their goal of organization.

During that period of heart-breaking endeavor to lay a foundation for a lasting union structure London helped to carry on. He was their source of inspiration and hope. "He was a father to us," is a phrase often repeated by the old-timers when they reminisce about those days of a quarter of a century ago. Like a father he was ever ready with advice, guidance and help. But like a father, too, he did not spare the rod of admonition and censure when he believed it necessary. This, indeed, was a distinguishing feature of London's relation with the workers. He never flattered them, never indulged them. He always spoke to them candidly. When he felt that the workers of the factory or of a local union were remiss in their duty to their organization or slack in a matter concerning the advancement of the general cause he would vent his ire upon them. He denounced them to their faces. He called them "traitors to your families," "scabs," "mules." And these stinging utterances seldom failed of effect. The men took them in good part for they knew that despite these words his heart was full of love and devotion to them and their families. They knew that the man who was apparently abusing them was giving them the best that was in him to save them from their own weaknesses and shortcomings.

Various were the duties devolving upon him as counsel of the union. He fought injunctions and haled to court employers who defaulted payment of wages. London had the distinction of fighting the first injunction sworn out by employers against strikers in the women's clothing industry, in the fall of 1899. The workers were then conducting strikes against two large cloak firms who jointly petitioned for an injunction. London succeeded in having the injunction vacated after it had been in force for two weeks. The victory had no immediate effect for the scare which the novel weapon threw into the ranks of the

strikers so demoralized their spirit that the strike was given up. But London's victory was recalled the next time employers attempted to make use of the injunction, and it heartened the workers to continue the fight in spite of the court's interference.

There was one phase of the legal work in connection with strikes that London refused to do, although it was the most common and therefore the most lucrative. He consistently refused to handle police court cases for arrested pickets. He explained that in these cases a lawyer is often driven to resort to questionable methods and this he refused to do. "I am not good for it," he would say.

The year 1910 was a historic one in the career of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and for that matter of the entire Jewish union movement of this country. In that year the cloakmakers of New York, 50,000 strong, revolted against their employers and fought a long, desperate battle to a final victory. The cloakmakers' strike was the turning point in the life of organized labor among the Jewish masses. The victory won by the cloakmakers roused the workers of all other trades. In the next few years they all followed their example and by 1914 the United Hebrew Trades embraced unions with a total membership of over 200,000. Before the cloakmakers' strike all the unions united in that federated body were able to claim a membership of not more than 25,000.

The revolt of the cloakmakers in 1910 was brought about by intolerable conditions in the shops. A system of "inside sub-contracting" divided the workers into aristocrats and slaves. The employer would contract with a few operators and pressers to make all the garments in the shop and these contractors would hire helpers to do the work. The sub-contractors and their favorites would earn fair, often high wages, while the majority of the workers were condemned to starvation wages. "There were sub-contracting pressers," writes Dr. Louis Levine, in his book *The Ladies' Garment Workers,* "who made $100 and $150 a week, while the helpers who worked for them would go home

at the end of a week's work with $6 or $8. . . . As in the matter of wages so in the matter of hours of work. . . . Throughout the industry the practice of indefinite hours in the busy season prevailed. Fourteen and sixteen hours a day were common. 'They come at five A. M. and stay until eleven or twelve at night. In fact, stay as long as the gas burns,' were the statements of those who knew the industry well."

There were also insanitary, filthy shops. Some of them were in converted tenements and rear houses. "From the point of view of sanitation and fire prevention, none of the shops could be said to be in good condition," reported an official who investigated conditions in twelve hundred out of the fifteen hundred shops in the industry.

The workers had to furnish their own machines and in some cases even bring the chairs on which to sit. "In the shops where the employers furnished the machines the operators were made responsible for repairs and were expected to supply their own needles, oil, cotton and silk threads," writes Dr. Levine. "In most of the shops which were fitted up with electrically driven machines a charge was imposed on the workers for the electricity. . . . In addition a system of deposit was in existence for the use of shuttles, bobbins and other machine parts which ranged from a dollar up. Besides being onerous in general such charges opened many loopholes for abuse. Unscrupulous employers did not hesitate to make profits by overcharging for electric power or by charging workers six cents for small spools of silk that cost them only four."

The men were called to down tools promptly at two o'clock on Thursday, July 7. The order was given through the medium of a "Red Edition" of the official organ of the union, the *New Post*. The papers were distributed during the lunch hour when the men came out into the street. In spite of the strike agitation that had been carried on by the union for many months and in spite of numerous reports of restlessness in the shops, the officials of the union were doubtful of the response to

their call. Abraham Rosenberg, who was then president of the International, wrote how the leaders felt as the critical hour approached, when the men had to walk out: "About two o'clock some of the members of the strike committee together with some representatives of the press went to the cloak district to see how the order of the strike committee would be taken. . . . Our people naturally were excited, their hearts beat fast and every minute seemed an age to them. When at ten minutes past two there were no workers to be seen, Abraham Cahan of the *Jewish Daily Forward* ironically asked, 'Well, where are your strikers?' Hardly had he spoken when he saw a sea of people surging from all the side streets of Fifth Avenue. Every moment the crowd grew larger and all moved in the same direction. By two thirty all the streets from 38th Street down and from the East River west were jammed with thousands of workers. In many streets cars and trucks had to be stopped because of the crowds. Many of our most devoted members wept for joy that their life-long labors had at length been crowned with success. In my mind I could picture to myself such a scene taking place when the Jews were led out of Egypt."

The cloak trade was completely tied up. The press characterized the movement as a gigantic uprising of the whole people against their oppressors.

A few days after the strike began, Meyer London, as counsel for the organization, drew up the following statement, which he published in the name of the strike committee.

"We offer no apology for the general strike. If at all we should apologize to the tens of thousands of the exploited men and women for not having aroused them before. . . . The cloak trade at present is the trade par excellence in which the 'survival of the fittest' has come to mean the 'survival of the meanest.' Among employers the manufacturer who is merciless in reducing wages and in stretching out the hours of labor, the manufacturer who disregards in dealing with his employees all laws human and divine is most likely to succeed. The employer who

neglects all sanitary requirements, who does business with money taken from the workmen under the guise of security and who levies a tax upon the employees for the use of electricity, is a danger not only to the employees but to every reputable employer in the trade. . . . We charge the employers with ruining the great trade built up by the industrious immigrants. We charge them with having corrupted the morale of thousands employed in the cloak trade. . . . The man who licks the boots of his employer, the individual who works without regard for time and for conditions is promoted in the factory. Treachery, slavishness and espionage are encouraged by the employers as great virtues of the cloakmakers. This general strike is greater than any union. It is an irresistible movement of the people. It is a protest against conditions that can no longer be tolerated. This is the first great attempt to regulate conditions in the trade, to do away with that anarchy and chaos which keeps some of the men working sixteen hours a day during the hottest months of the year while thousands of others have no employment whatever. . . . We cannot trust ourselves to the kind mercies of the employers. To our sorrow we have trusted them long enough. We ask for humane treatment; we demand the right to live; we refuse to be annihilated; we realize that we must be united; we know that we have the sympathy of every man that deserves the name. We know that organized labor throughout the country will applaud our efforts. We appeal to the people of America to assist us in our struggle"

The strike continued for eight weeks. At the beginning the employers failed to realize the seriousness of the situation. They expected that with the passing of the first flush of excitement the men would return to their work. Their hopes were bolstered up by their accurate knowledge of the poverty of the cloakmakers, the scanty funds in their treasury. But when a week passed and the reports in the press continued to tell of the growing militancy of the strikers the manufacturers began to consider negotiation. Their first move was made on the tenth day of the strike. And

from that moment the two sides moved nearer and nearer to an understanding.

The road was difficult to travel and several times it seemed as if the task were hopeless. Prominent Jews were called in to help. Louis D. Brandeis came from Boston and Louis Marshall offered his services in the name of a group that appealed to him. And while the heads were conferring and protesting their desire for peace the battle raged outside.

The employers as usual turned to the police and to the courts for help and as usual received the most generous response. The courts issued a sweeping injunction prohibiting picketing, while the police were as brutal as they knew how to be to "a lot of immigrant Jew radicals." The leaders of the strike and the workers defied both the courts and the police. The picketing was continued undiminished despite all threats. All this had its effect upon the stubborn manufacturers at the conference table. They began to give way.

In their first communication asking for negotiation the employers demanded specific stipulation that no mention of union control in the shops would be made at the conference. The employers were ready to discuss wages and conditions of work but nothing else. From this position they gradually receded to a point where they agreed to what was called a "Preferential union shop" and consented to an arrangement by which disputes between workers and employers would be settled by committees on which both sides had equal representation. The preferential union shop meant in effect virtually a closed shop. The employer was obliged to hire union men only although he was allowed to choose as between one union man and another. The immediate evils that caused the strike were abolished entirely or largely mitigated. The men obtained a substantial increase in wages and shorter hours.

As counsel for the union London carried on all the negotiations, attended all the conferences and was to a very large extent responsible for the final understanding reached and settlement

made, but this work of negotiation was but a small part of his activities during the strike. Of course he was in court whenever it was necessary to defend the union, but the most important part of his work consisted in keeping up the morale of the men. He spoke to them, encouraged them, obtained funds for them—in short, he made it possible for the strike to go on.

During the fifth week of the struggle the *New York Call*, the Socialist daily which supported the strike, carried a feature story of London's activities in the strike. It read:

"'Ask Meyer London about it'; this phrase has become a sort of second nature to every one of the fifty-odd leaders of the striking cloakmakers. If you are in doubt ask Meyer London. That is their motto. . . Meyer London is the orator, the prophet, the pillar of fire which lights the way for and guides the 75,000 cloakmakers who are now engaged in a bitter struggle. . . Unlike the oracles of old, however, Meyer London does not hide himself behind some mysterious shroud. Instead he is at the office of the strike committee from morning until late into the night. And sometimes until the morning of the next day.

"Meyer London is the attorney for the striking cloakmakers. But if you think that he is only an attorney for the strikers you are greatly mistaken. He is more than that. He is a brother of theirs; a comrade in their cause. If he were only an attorney working for the client for what was in it you would not find him spending eighteen hours and sometimes all of the twenty-four hours of the day at the strikers' quarters or in conference with somebody devising plans whereby the striking cloakmakers and their wives and children will be benefited.

"Sometimes when all the business has been attended to, when reports from the strike zone are highly satisfactory, Meyer London takes a quarter of an hour off. He then moves his chair into one corner of the room, lights a big black cigar and lets his grey eyes, tinged with a smile which is always a mixture of kindness and sadness, wander about the room examining the people with an interest and curiosity as if he saw something new, something wonderfully interesting in each and every one of them.

"A reporter of the *Call* happened around when Meyer London was in just such a mood. 'Say,' London said, 'Is this not intensely human, this great struggle? It takes my breath away when I think of it, the grandeur of the struggle! When I think into how many homes this strike of the cloakmakers penetrates, how many children are anxiously asking whether papa had won out against the bosses! How many wives, in spite of the fact that the grocer and butcher have a long heavy bill to show them, send their husbands to the meeting halls with the words "Fight to win" on their lips—when I think of all this I sometimes cannot sleep for hours.'

"Perhaps this line of talk may seem sentimental to you, unworthy or unlikely of a lawyer, of a man of cold reason and subtle logic. Well, then, you don't know Meyer London. Meyer London is a lawyer by profession but human, too human by nature. 'My private practice is going to the dogs on account of this strike,' London said. 'I have not had a chance to go down to the office in weeks, but then who can think of practice and clients when this great war is on? A wonderful battle, and they are winning it!' "

Abraham Rosenberg is authority for the following story: when the strike had been on about seven weeks it dawned upon the strike committee that London had not received any payment for his services during all the long months he had given up his entire time to planning the strike and keeping it going. The committee knew that he was not a rich man and that he had deprived himself of whatever income he might have had from his law practice by closing up his office as soon as the strike broke out. It was decided to give him $2,000. Rosenberg himself was delegated to present the check. When Rosenberg came to London and told him of his mission, London burst out laughing. He took the offer of the money as a huge joke. Rosenberg explained that he was in earnest and that he had brought the check with him. "Give it to the strikers," London said to him. Rosenberg had expected that London would act as he did and he was prepared for him. He told London that if he refused the

money the strike committee would have to dispense with his services. "We have decided not to permit you to work for us gratis." This was the only argument that could have had the desired effect.

When an injunction against the strikers was argued before the Supreme Court of New York state, London appeared in defense of the union and made a powerful and courageous plea for trade unionism, giving an interpretation of the law in the light of common sense and in the spirit of humanity.

He began in a tone of defiance:

"The Supreme Court is supreme, but it is not superior to the will of the people as expressed by the Legislature and as embodied in our laws. We are determined to exercise all the rights given to us by our laws and by the Constitution. No court can deprive us of our rights." Then he argued the point of law on which the employers based their request for the injunction in words that can be read to-day with profit. "The plaintiff asks for a solemn declaration by the court that violence must not be committed. You are asked to issue an order restraining the use of violence, force, fraud and intimidation. Have not such acts been prohibited long ago? Will an order of this court add any weight or solemnity to the existing laws? Have all our laws been suspended? Is the police department unable to cope with the situation? Has the District Attorney's office fallen asleep? Or shall the Supreme Court do the policeman's work?"

And London proceeded to discuss the situation in the industry, the legal right of employees to organize, and to prove that these legal rights of necessity imply absolute freedom to strike and to picket.

"My opponent seeks an order declaring the general strike is a conspiracy. He wants the union enjoined from continuing the strike. His claim is that we want a monopoly of union labor, and labor being a commodity, a monopoly of union labor is unlawful. Strange reasoning indeed! He would have the law say to us, 'You may form unions, you may organize strikes but

in heaven's name do not form strong unions. Do not organize effective strikes! As soon as all working men join the union you will become a monopoly and you will violate the law. As soon as your strike becomes effective and paralyzes the entire industry the court will step in and say "You are violating the law." ' In other words you may have unions but they must be weak. We may have strikes but not successful ones."

London proceeded to discuss the question of law from precedent and prove that "a contract between a union and an employer providing for the exclusive employment of union men is legal. . . I hear so much about the rights of the non-union man who is being prevented from working for his noble and generous employer. Where is that non-union man? Where is his lawyer? Where is his complaint? I say to my opponent, 'Be honest. Your real complaint is that you have no non-union man. That there are no scabs. You want the court to get scabs for you.' What a peculiar task for the Supreme Court! The Court cannot accommodate you. The cloakmakers of this city have all joined the union. Throw the penal code at them; hurl injunction after injunction after them. You cannot get them to return to work unless their legitimate demands are reasonably satisfied."

And he closed with plain words.

"Our people mistrust the manufacturer. They have had enough experience. The average employer's word is as good as his bond, and his bond is as worthless as his word. We know that when he speaks of his love for American liberty he is thinking of the American dollar. We cannot entrust the helpless immigrant to the hands of the merciless employer. Public policy requires that intelligently conducted and well organized labor unions should take care of the workmen, educate them and guide them. The trade union is not only a necessity, it is a blessing."

The settlement of the cloakmakers' strike was accepted by the leading spirits among the workers with feelings of mixed joy and fear. The employers retreated a long way from their original position. Many of the evils of the shops were removed; wages

were raised and hours reduced; the union gained mightily in prestige and seemed firmly established in the allegiance of the men. All this was cause for jubilation.

But there was uneasiness over certain novelties in this settlement: specifically, the basic idea of perpetual peace in the industry, the scrapping of the strike as a weapon, and the introduction of conciliation and arbitration in its place. These ideas were embodied in a document called the Protocol.

Now the strike had been regarded by the workers almost as a sacred institution. They had been schooled to consider it their one safe weapon. To them the strike was not a perilous, agonizing struggle to be avoided whenever possible and to be employed only as a last, desperate resort. They considered the strike as a revolutionary act, to be rehearsed frequently as a means of fostering the revolutionary spirit and of keeping the fire of protest and discontent from dying out.

The settlement also contained the novel idea that the union deal not with the individual employer but with an employer's association. That also seemed to do violence to certain revolutionary theories. For by encouraging combination among employers the union seemed to be strengthening the hands of its foes. Furthermore the settlement did not decree a strictly closed union shop and union control. It permitted the employer to pick one union man and reject another; grievances were to be tried and settled by representatives of both sides. And serious trade controversies were left to the final judgment of an "impartial chairman" representing the public. Workers schooled in the agitation of twenty years could not but revolt at these innovations. These men had been taught never to trust the good intentions of the employer; never to believe his promises, never to take stock in his code of ethics.

Events following the settlement proved that the doubts of those who were not enthusiastic over the Protocol were not entirely baseless. Many of the employers dodged the provisions of the settlement, violated its spirit, and sought to get around its pro-

visions. The leaders of the union had their hands full. The men had to be taught to understand and accept the Protocol. The employers had to be brought to the realization of the grave consequences that would result from their misbehavior. The machinery that had been hastily constructed to carry out the terms of peace soon proved inadequate and even on occasion an obstruction. The good faith that was hoped for did not always materialize. There were many more clashes in the shops than either side had anticipated. The arbitration bodies established to deal with shop quarrels did not function satisfactorily because of the tremendous amount of work piled on them. New machinery had to be created and installed and new methods tried.

In all these tasks London contributed his share, which was always out of all proportion to what was expected of him or of any one man. He conducted hearings before the impartial boards, he planned the new machinery provided for by the settlement, he put the spirit of the union not only into the original Protocol but into all the modifications made later. It was at the hearings before the grievance committees and arbitration boards that old prejudices had to be toned down and if possible eliminated. This task fell almost entirely upon London, the spokesman of the union. London's method of pleading before these boards, he planned the new machinery provided for by the there was the spirit of the old revolutionist who dreamed of something more than material gains. From time to time this spark would burst into a blaze of zeal for his workingmen. The representatives of the employers came to know London as a fair, sincere, albeit passionate, defender of their cause.

In the course of the first few years of the Protocol the union grew greatly in strength. The closed shop which the employers had feared most and had sought to escape by means of the protocol was virtually established in the whole industry. The union quickly drew into its ranks all the men and women employed in the shops and factories of the cloak and suit trade, and with the consciousness of power came the urge to utilize it. Many leaders

fretted under the restraint put upon the workers by the Protocol.

Friction between employers and employees was constant. As time progressed the irritation threw the whole system into disorder. The manufacturers resorted to all kind of subterfuges to evade the terms of the contract and to undermine the union. The Protocol machinery with all its elaborations and improvements failed to give complete satisfaction. Grievances of employees piled up against employers and the feeling grew among the men that industrial justice was unobtainable by peaceful methods.

For a time the officers of the union sought to maintain a policy of strict obedience to all the terms of the Protocol. They urged peace and conciliation and assured the workers that in the long run all tangles and obstacles would disappear. The leaders were altogether sincere in their position and they also believed in the sincerity of the more influential members of the employers' association, who constantly protested their loyalty to the protocol.

The situation reached a climax in 1913 after three years of trial. The governing bodies of the workers' organization divided on the question of policy. The officers of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union stood for peace and conciliation as provided for in the Protocol. The Joint Board of the cloakmakers demanded a new policy of militant aggressiveness. The strike of 1910 had been organized, called and brought to a conclusion by the officers of the International. The International had also collaborated with the association of the employers in working out the terms of the protocol and it represented the union in signing the agreement. The Joint Board grew in importance only after the locals of the cloakmakers had been built up following the victory of 1910.

The International officials were attached to the Protocol and preached patience to their men. In the first place, the Protocol was partly their creation and they were obligated to observe its terms. Secondly, they had known the privations and troubles of strikes and dreaded a repetition of them. Thirdly, they, not being in immediate touch with the men in the shops, viewed

the situation from a more detached standpoint than the actual workers of their locals. The Joint Board was composed of the more active and more militant workers of the shops. Its officials were prone to be critical of the Protocol, jealous of the rights of the men. To the Joint Board members the employer was not the suave, polished gentleman of the conference room, but the harsh exploiter of the factory.

As the men in the shops grew more and more restive under the restraints of the Protocol they turned to the Joint Board for relief. The Joint Board gradually arrogated power to itself and began talking in much firmer tones than the employers had been accustomed to hear from the International officials. The official publication of the Joint Board, *The New Post,* went much further than even the representatives dared to go in aggressive criticism. It accused the employers of using underhand methods in dodging their pledges. On one occasion it admonished the employer to stop stealing from the earnings of the workmen.

The employers resented these attacks and called upon the International to discipline the Joint Board. The employers also contended that the Protocol was a contract between their association and the International and threatened to refuse to deal with the fractious Joint Board.

The origins of these difficulties were bickerings in the shops over prices and wages, discharge of workers, discrimination against union members, and general working conditions. It was in effect the old battle over the division of the fruits of the joint efforts of capital and labor. But as it ever had been on the East Side, matters of principle and ideals became interwoven with these purely economic problems. The spokesman for the International, John A. Dyche, who was a conservative trade unionist of the Gompers type, criticized the Joint Board leaders for their revolutionary ideas. He made it his constant practice to quarrel with the Socialists and to defend the political policy of the leaders of the American Federation of Labor, which was in sharp conflict with the Socialist political policy. He found it convenient

to connect the restlessness in the shops and the growing dissatisfaction of the men against the indifference of the International with the revolutionary impatience of the younger generation of the Russian immigrants.

"We confess," he wrote in the International organ, "that we have not followed the literature on the subject of class war. The problem before the officers of the International has been how to improve the condition of its members, how to enable them to sell their labor to their employer to better advantage. It was for this purpose and for none other that they have been elected to office. We confess that when we entered into an agreement or signed a Protocol of peace with our employers we did not stop to consider whether it would be in consonance with the principles of the Social Democratic Party, either in Germany or in this country."

The struggle placed the older Socialists in a rather puzzling dilemma. They were in complete agreement with neither side. At the beginning of the difficulty they were inclined to favor the position of the Joint Board, urging a more militant attitude toward the employers' association and discouraging too much confidence in the Protocol.

Meyer London, as the attorney for both the International and the Joint Board, held himself aloof from the struggle, but his sympathies were on the side of the Joint Board. He knew the grievances of the men to be justified, and to him this was the determining factor. He could overlook the supposed transgressions of the Protocol against Socialist theory, he could ignore the hostility to his party constantly shown by the leaders of the International, but he could not remain indifferent to the wrongs to the men in the shops.

However, as the struggle continued, plunging the entire movement into the controversy, the leadership of the Joint Board fell into the hands of extremists. The Joint Board was no longer content to disagree with the International officials. Neither was it content with merely criticizing the Protocol and accusing the

employers of insincerity and bad faith. The Joint Board now declared open war against both the International and the employers' association. It denounced the International officials as traitors and demanded the abrogation of the Protocol. The older Socialists, including London, sensed the danger confronting the organization. They had had experience with the "impossiblist" tactics in the unions and thought that disaster was inevitable. The employers' reaction to the new move of the Joint Board confirmed their worst fears. The Association let it be known that they would have no dealings with the Joint Board extremists. This was equivalent to a declaration of war. If the Joint Board remained firm a strike was inevitable and a strike, when the leadership of the union was split wide open, would be disastrous.

London now went over to the side of the International. He resigned as attorney for the Joint Board and threw himself wholeheartedly into the fight to oust the extremists from the leadership of the cloakmakers' union. The battle was carried on mainly in the Jewish press, the Socialist *Forward* serving as the mouthpiece of the side London supported, while the conservative *Wahrheit* and the anarchist *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* espoused the cause of the Joint Board. Both sides appealed to the membership at large, as well as to the public opinion of the general Jewish working masses.

The outcome of the long and bitter struggle that shook the organization to its very foundations was victory for the moderates of the movement. The conservative officials of the International were forced into retirement together with the extremists of the Joint Board.

The delegates to the Cleveland convention of the International in 1914 who established socialist leadership in the International voted renewed confidence and gratitude to Meyer London. On the second day after convening, the convention decided almost unanimously to invite London to attend its next session. He came the following morning. The minutes of the convention thus report what happened: "Mr. London reached the hall just

prior to adjournment, escorted by the committee appointed to meet him. He was received with continuous applause and cheers. President Rosenberg welcomed London to the convention and stated that the delegates expected him to remain to the end and assist in the work."

The following day London was given an opportunity to unburden himself of his opinions before the delegates. He spoke with his usual frankness and fearlessness. He knew that in the next few weeks he would need the active help of all the workers, and particularly of the fervent Socialists, many of whom had stood with the extremists, for a Congressional election was approaching. Nevertheless, he fearlessly told the delegates the error of their ways and denounced some of them for their irresponsible behavior. Here is the story of the speech as reported in the convention minutes:

"President Rosenberg:—Two days ago you decided almost unanimously to invite Comrade London to attend this convention. I now take pleasure in introducing to you our friend and comrade and brother, Meyer London.

"The speaker introduced by the chairman was unable to proceed with his address for several minutes owing to the applause and cheering that greeted his presence on the platform.

"Mr. Meyer London:—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen Sisters and Brothers. My heart is too full to speak as freely and as fully as I would care to. I am very grateful to you for this demonstration. I am sure it is entirely unnecessary, as no matter what has happened or may happen between me and the cloakmakers' union or between me and any other union, I belong to them and they are mine. I want to say, brothers, that I have no feelings of anger, no resentment or antipathy towards the few brothers who disagree with my views. There is only one enemy the laboring class is confronted with; there is only one dangerous influence the laboring people have to contend with. As the German Marseillaise expresses it, *'Der Feind den wir am meisten hassen ist die Unwissenheit der Massen.'* The victory we have

to gain is the victory of that portion of the working class which is awake, which is intelligent, which has thrown off the chains of lethargy. . . . It is almost all the time a struggle with ignorance, and no man is worth anything to the labor movement, no man can be looked upon as a factor in the labor movement if he at any time gets angry at the laboring people, angry at the masses or at the union. . . We have had moments of chaos; we have had moments of confusion; we have had moments of suffering. We have had leaders and misleaders; we shall have them; we cannot get rid of them. But there would have been no misleaders; there would have been no deceivers if the laboring class were not suffering; if the thousands of workers made a decent living; if conditions were not miserable. Let us at no moment permit ourselves to forget that we have really one enemy and that is the enemy who separates the working class from the opportunity to be free; who divorces the producer from the means of production. Let us never forget it. . . I hope this convention will bring the element of unity. I hope you will be courageous enough, manly enough, to discuss every question frankly and openly, without prejudice or malice, as men should. The coward is the most dangerous man in the labor movement, and while I may disagree with some things that some of the officers have done, let me tell you that I respect a hundred times more the officer who will openly oppose me, provided I know he is one hundred percent honest, provided I know he speaks his mind and believes every word he says. We need honesty in this movement. We need that kind of honesty which is not afraid of anybody, not even of the newspapers. You must have differences of opinion but those differences of opinion should not divert your attention from the principal issues before you. . . I thank you, brothers, for the kindness you have shown me. I have not for one minute thought of deserting the cloakmakers, but when the ship was on fire, having on board a captain who was blind and sailors who were drunk, I thought it a sensible thing to step aside so that I could come at the proper time and lend a helping hand. May

my hand rot if I ever refuse to give the best that is in me to the working class of America."

In the Congressional campaign that began soon after the adjournment of this convention, the International and the Joint Board, as well as the rank and file of the membership of the cloak and suitmakers' union, proved that the reception given London at the convention had not been mere courtesy to a guest. The official bodies together with the rank and file exerted themselves to the utmost to bring about his election. When the campaign was over the official publication of the International gloried in London's victory. The sentiment expressed in its editorial column at the time when the union's civil war was still fresh in the minds of all is best proof of the strong hold London had retained on the confidence and affection of all members of the organization irrespective of whether they had stood with him or against him during the internal struggles. The editorial reads in part:

"Meyer London's victory in the 12th Congressional District was a victory for Socialism and the workers. The workers have elected him because they know him intimately and therefore have implicit confidence that he will do his best on the floor of Congress to promote the cause of labor. The workers of the East Side glory in London's victory. They feel that they could have no more fit representative to voice their interests in Congress. London has proved a friend to them at a time when they were struggling to eke out an existence. He has been with them in their keenest struggles. He guided them to many a victory. He was practically one of them at all times."

London's share in laying the foundation of the other International union of Jewish workers with which he was most intimately connected—the furriers' union—is told by Isidore Cohen, the first president of that organization, as follows:

"We began to reorganize the fur workers in 1910, after the effects of the depression of the previous years had passed away and the men had begun to show signs of recovering their courage and

their 'will to live.' For many months a small group of enthusiasts labored against the toughest odds to draw the men back into the ranks. We had neither material means nor spiritual guidance. Then Meyer London came to us. We invited him to address the first mass meeting of the reorganized union, which took place in an East Side hall a few days after the Triangle disaster, March 25, 1911. The meeting was in fact both a memorial to the victims of the fire and a call to arms. London came, spoke and remained with us. That evening he took our infant organization to his heart and bestowed upon it all the passionate affection and attention of which he was capable. There was no spoken or tacit arrangement regarding the services or compensation. We just adopted him as our father and he assumed his fatherly duties and responsibilities with cheerful eagerness. He was with us at all hours of the day and night. His home was always open to our committees to come and go. His time and energy were practically at our disposal.

"Then came the historic strike of 1912, the great struggle which proved the birth pains of our union. For twelve weeks 7,000 of our men resisted starvation at home and brutality on the picket line. When the strike was called the union treasury contained about $600. The expenses mounted up to thousands of dollars a day. We also had to provide relief to our starving women and children. London battled and suffered with us. I shall never forget one little incident that occurred during the fourth week of the strike. We came to London with our usual tale of woe, told him of the desperate plight of the strikers' families. On the table near him were lying an unpaid gas bill for about $18 and a pass book from a bank. He picked up the book, looked into it and consulted his check stubs. Then he remarked that his bank balance amounted to $34, made out a check for that sum and gave it to us.

"During the agonizing weeks of the strike London forsook his law office, his home, his friends and his personal affairs and gave himself to us wholly and utterly. He was there to inspire his

men with his oratory; he was there to comfort and guide the strike leaders; he was there to plead with the bankers for loans and with fellow labor organizations for help. He was there at the end to negotiate the peace terms with the employers and to write the contract which laid a firm foundation for the International Fur Workers' Union of North America.

"After the victory was won and the men were back on their jobs and the Union was firmly established we discussed the matter of compensation for London. We knew only too well that it would be impossible to obtain from him a bill or accounting for his services. We also knew that it would be impossible to prevail upon him to accept a sum commensurate with the services that stretched over a period of two years. We therefore decided to act diplomatically. We had a fur coat made for Mrs. London, bought a gold watch for him and wrote out a check for $2,000. We had all this delivered to his home. The next day he called us on the telephone, and asked us to come to his office. We found him in a towering rage. He stormed at us. How dared we send him money he did not ask us for? He was deeply hurt—we had offended him by reducing his services to terms of dollars and cents. We listened to him in silence, for we knew the depth of his sincerity.

"Later, we learned that he donated the money to the Socialist movement. The gold watch he gave to help a worker in need. Only the coat was not disposed of by him, most likely because we took care not to let him know about it. We had forewarned Mrs. London to keep this fact from him as long as possible."

On the night of the settlement, when the starved, distracted strikers burst into transports of joy over their victory, their first impulse was to demonstrate their gratitude to their leaders and champions. They left the hall where they had received the glad news and marched first to cheer the *Jewish Daily Forward*, the organ of the Jewish Socialists, and from there they proceeded to the home of Meyer London, two or three blocks away. London

had retired for the night after completing the nerve-racking negotiations with the employers. But he was roused from his sleep by the mighty cheers of the thousands of workers outside, on East Broadway. He was obliged to dress, come out and deliver an address to them.

London remained its counsel and leader for many years after the organization had been placed upon a solid foundation. His hold on the affection of the rank and file never weakened. In all his political campaigns the furriers were only second to the cloakmakers in rendering moral and material support.

Shortly after the strike had been settled the furriers' union found occasion to demonstrate its gratitude to London. He was running for Congress and the Furriers' Union called upon its members to give him their full, unstinted support. In an appeal to the members, the president of the organization said:

"You certainly have not forgotten our general strike. Our victory was hard and painfully won. We owe this victory to the courage and self-sacrifice of the entire membership. But if there is one man who merits gratitude for our triumph, that man is Meyer London. London sacrificed himself for us. He gave us all of his time, money and energy. He broke down in health as a result of his work for us during the strike and many months before the strike was called. It was he who brought our bitter struggle to a final victory."

CHAPTER VIII

The Workmen's Circle

The labor movement in all advanced European countries has proceeded along three parallel courses, political, trade union and coöperative. The Jewish immigrants, drawing inspiration from the progressive workers abroad, sought to emulate them in all three respects, with uneven success. They were most successful in the industrial field; they made considerable headway in the political sphere; but they failed completely in their attempts to build up coöperatives. All their efforts at building up coöperative enterprises in production or distribution came to grief.

In one of these undertakings in the early years of the century London became involved and suffered a penalty which he himself imposed on his meager purse. The incident though insignificant in itself, reveals the attitude of fatherly solicitude that London always maintained toward the radical cause.

It was in 1906. A group of active union men in the cloak industry started a coöperative cloak shop and retail store on the East Side. The shop was also intended to serve as a place of refuge for workers who found it hard to get jobs on account of their union actovities. The store was to sell garments to the wives and daughters of working men who could not afford the prices of the private stores. It was also hoped that out of this 'tiny acorn a great oak would grow,' a great cloak factory run by workers for workers.

When the enterprise was planned London advised against it. He doubted the business ability of the men. Some time later, however, he was persuaded to lend his assistance for the possible good the enterprise might do to the cause of trade unionism.

He was not himself a member of the coöperative organization but he attended meetings, gave counsel and helped in many other ways.

This cloak coöperative traveled the road of all other coöperative enterprises on the East Side. One day London received an invitation to attend a meeting at which the business was to be liquidated. There he listened to the usual tale of errors and ill-luck and other woes, which concluded with the report that the coöperative was faced with a deficit of $700 and with no possible source of funds. Everybody voted in favor of putting the coöperative into voluntary bankruptcy.

Then London asked for the floor. He told the small group assembled that such an act on their part would discredit the entire labor movement. An organization of workmen, he said, even if engaged in ordinary business, is in honor bound to preserve the good name of the entire working class. He therefore proposed that the sum owing to the creditors be paid in full. He offered to contribute towards it as much money as he had, one hundred dollars, and called upon the others present each to do his share. The appeal was heeded and the coöperative was liquidated honorably and honestly.

Instead of the coöperative the Jewish radical workingmen developed an institution that is unique in the labor movement of the world—an institution for cultural development, spiritual guidance and mutual aid. Formally and legally the Workmen's Circle is a fraternal order insuring its members against sickness and death. But in fact it is a great deal more than that. It is a part of the socialist and labor movement. It is as much concerned with advancing the political and industrial cause of labor as with its own fraternal affairs. And it does not stop there. One of the most important spheres of its activities is educational work among its members and their children. In its declaration of principles the Workmen's Circle outlines its activities in the following brief statement: "The Workmen's Circle is an organization of progressive workingmen for the

purpose of mutual aid and self-improvement. Its activities are as wide and as deep as the entire range of the workers' lives. Its field extends over the material, moral and social interests of progressive people."

Starting out as the weakest and the least welcome of the three phases of the labor movement, the Workmen's Circle forged ahead and grew to be the most vigorous of them all. It lived up to much more than its most enthusiastic sponsors had ever expected of it. If it were not for the Workmen's Circle, the achievements of the trade unions and the Socialist party might have been impossible. It was the Workmen's Circle that saw many a strike through to success. It was the Workmen's Circle that provided the funds for political campaigns, for revolutionary relief. And it was the Workmen's Circle that has stood like a rock against the many storms that ravaged the movement from within and from without. The Workmen's Circle is the one branch of the Jewish labor movement that never succumbed to the influence of extremists; that never permitted itself to be diverted from its course.

Spiritually and culturally the Workmen's Circle built better than it had originally planned. It has organized radical schools for the young and conducted forums and lecture courses for adults. It has made it possible for many an educational book to see the light of publication; for many a teacher and preacher of ideals to obtain a platform and a hearing. In times of depression in the party or in the trade unions, the Workmen's Circle has served as a beacon of hope and a spiritual resting place.

The Workmen's Circle was organized at the opening of the century. For a number of years it had but few friends among the intellectuals who disparaged all activities that did not contribute directly to the making of the social revolution. But in the course of time it forced attention and recognition. The Workmen's Circle is the one labor institution for whose existence the rank and file is wholly to be credited. It is the one institution that was conceived in the mind of the rank and file and

was built from the foundation up by the energy and brain of the rank and file.

The one intellectual that the Workmen's Circle took to its bosom was Meyer London. He was invited to serve as its attorney in 1905, when the Workmen's Circle was legally instituted as an insurance and fraternal order. From that day until his death twenty-one years later, London remained in that position. His duties as legal counsel, however, were secondary. Principally he served as spiritual guide and adviser. In a way he was the connecting link between the Socialist party, the trade union movement and the Workmen's Circle. It was also largely due to London's guidance that the Workmen's Circle escaped the influence of "impossiblism," just as it was largely due to his inspiration that it did not stagnate in the depressing duties in connection with the sick and dead.

In a political pamphlet that the Workmen's Circle published during London's campaign in 1916 it paid him the following tribute: "London has been the spiritual guide of this order. He was present at every one of our conventions; at all committee and sub-committee meetings. The advice he gave us always bore the stamp of idealism. The meager reward he obtained he often returned in the form of contributions to the various funds collected by the organization."

CHAPTER IX

The First Socialist Congressman from the East

In the four years immediately preceding the outbreak of the World War, the Socialist and labor movements among the Jewish masses of New York attained their greatest growth numerically and their loftiest height morally. Under the banner of the United Hebrew Trades were arrayed more than 100 local unions with a membership of over 200,000 men and women. Within that period of four years all the great unions of the needle trades consolidated their forces by waging long and desperate strikes to triumphant conclusions. Two of those strikes—that of the shirtwaist makers late in 1909 and of the cloakmakers half a year later—attracted the interest of the general public and engaged the sympathies and support of many young idealists. Out of these struggles emerged the powerful national organizations which were destined to play the leading rôle in the Jewish labor movement of the following decade.

All these unions were imbued with Socialist principles, led by Socialist leaders. Since the early years of the century the character of the great immigrant mass pouring in from Russia and Poland had changed. The new immigrant was a young radical who had been under the influence or the direct tutelage of some Socialist organization in the old country. He came here a trained member of the radical army and he sought eagerly for an opportunity to join a similar army in the new home. Whereas in former years the newly arrived immigrants were in effect a menace to organized labor, a stumbling block to its progress, the new immigrant was a help and an inspiration. He did more than merely join the ranks and march in line. He was as a rule

more enthusiastic, more sacrificing than his older comrade.

The older immigrants and even the native workers also followed Socialist teachings and its leaders. It must be remembered that the Socialists and radicals of kindred schools had been teaching the ideals of unionism ever since the need for unions made itself felt. The Socialist press had always been the mouthpiece and propagandist of the unions; and the Socialist agitators had always been only too ready to do missionary work for the union cause.

The strongly entrenched unions inspired by socialist ideals became the strongest factor in the community life of the Jewish quarters. The *Jewish Daily Forward* led public opinion on social, political and economic affairs. The Workmen's Circle pointed the way to public and cultural activities that had been considered outside the sphere of organizations of that kind. No important public activity could be undertaken and carried through successfully without the support of the organized workers and their Socialist press.

The East Side campaigns for Congress grew in dramatic interest with the advance of the century. The Republican candidates receded into the background and the battle was confined to Tammany Hall on one side and the Socialist Party on the other. Campaigning was done almost exclusively by the Socialists, Tammany relying upon the effective work of their henchmen on Election Day. In time the Socialist Congressional campaigns on the East Side came to symbolize the struggle for honest elections, the struggle for an honest vote and an honest count. Liberals and progressives, and even conservatives who attached importance to political honesty, watched the Socialist fight with keen concern. Prominent men of those groups offered their assistance in the battle. The East Side became the arena of young idealists and older liberals who came to do battle against the Tammany that had debauched American democracy.

What these idealists and liberals from the outside failed to accomplish was finally achieved by the rank and file of the

triumphant trade unions of the immigrant workers. When Meyer London ran for Congress for the third time in 1914 the unions of the cloakmakers, furriers, and tailors were in a flourishing state. These as well as many others had recently won prestige in general strikes, had consolidated their forces, were proud of their strength and conscious of their power. And all of them owed allegiance to the Socialist Party, and all felt obligated and devoted towards the person of its candidate, Meyer London. London had given of his heart and brain; of his very soul and fiber to make trade unionism among the immigrant workers possible. The workers knew it; they admired him and loved him for it. Now they came to repay him part of the debt they owed him.

The unions organized special campaign committees and collected money in the shops for the election fight. They sent their men to serve as watchers at the polls, men who had been on the picket line and knew how to take care of themselves. And they made it clear to the ward heelers that they would stand for no nonsense. For the first time the Tammany organization of the East Side came up against an organized force that was ready to meet it on its own ground.

The East Side was keyed up to the highest pitch of excitement on the night of election. All day long stories of Tammany violence and fraud agitated the district. The headquarters of the Socialist Party swarmed with volunteer workers. Men of all walks of life offered their services. There was a volunteer lawyers' committee, a volunteer watchers' committee, a volunteer canvass committee. The East Side was determined to have its will at the polls.

At nightfall, even before the closing of the polls, crowds began gathering in front of the *Forward* building on Rutgers Square, where the election returns were scheduled to be flashed on a screen. The mass grew denser as the hours advanced. It covered the entire square and the grounds of Seward Park and overflowed into the side streets where the screen was hardly visible. Three

long hours passed until the first London returns began to come in. This long wait served only to make the nerves of the assembled men more tense, more electric. From the moment the first report from the first complete election district was shown to the people all were glued to their places. When reports were favorable to London they cheered and yelled for joy. However, the hours dragged on and no conclusive tally was given out. Rumors spread that the count was being held up by the Tammany election officials in a number of important polling places—the usual Tammany trick. About eleven o'clock the *Jewish Daily News* which supported Mr. Henry M. Goldfogle, the Tammany candidate, published an extra edition claiming victory for its party.

Still the crowd lingered. They refused to believe the Tammany organ. The socialist *Forward* published one extra edition after another with hopeful news. About two o'clock in the morning a definite tally was finally obtained. London's election was conceded by the Tammany leaders.

The cheering, dancing, singing and speech-making lasted until the dawn. The thousands in the streets aroused many more thousands in the sleeping tenements. London was brought to the Square at four o'clock in the morning to be cheered and embraced by his admirers. One of the speakers pointed to the East where the sun was beginning to shed its first rays of light and cried out, "Day is breaking in the sky, and day is also breaking in the Jewish quarters of the East Side."

The morning papers of the city announced the reëlection of Congressman Goldfogle. This error was characteristic of the ignorance of the papers of what was going on in the immigrant quarters. The political reporters were not aware of the great political battle being waged on the East Side. In calculating the election returns they compared the insignificant Republican vote to the Democratic vote and concluded that the Democratic candidate had scored a victory.

When the truth became generally known the following day

it evoked the greatest interest in the news and editorial pages. The first Socialist to represent the greatest city in Congress! A Tammany stronghold stormed by a Socialist! That was sensational indeed. The editors took it more or less calmly, good humoredly. Some offered congratulations to Meyer London. The *New York Times* preached a long sermon of advice. It warned London not to lose his head, not to be blinded by popularity and victory, told him to go easy in the House of Representatives, to be careful, not to attempt to force his ideas and his party principles on the attention of his colleagues, to be moderate and tactful—otherwise he might be looked upon as a joke, as a court jester.

The Sunday following Election Day the Socialists of New York packed Madison Square Garden to the rafters to celebrate London's victory. Hours before the doors were opened the Garden was besieged by thousands of men and women. Following addresses by many leading Socialists, London made a short speech. He said:

"I don't expect to work wonders in Congress. I shall, however, say a new word and I shall accomplish one thing that is not in the platform of the Socialist Party. I hope that my person will represent an entirely different type of Jew from the kind that Congress has been accustomed to see."

London's services in Congress proved the advice of the *Times* quite superfluous and his own forecast entirely too modest.

CHAPTER X

First Speech and First Impressions in the House

When Meyer London was elected to congress he was just under forty-three years old. He was in the full flush of his splendid intellectual powers and at the height of his personal popularity. It is safe to say that there had never been a man more genuinely loved than London in the circles in which he moved. The thing that endeared him to everybody was his heart, his soul. He was a man infinitely lovable, and organizations instinctively felt that when he worked for them he gave his whole being rather than merely his knowledge of law and court procedure.

He had been in the United States twenty-three years and he knew his country. He did not consider that the nation was bound by the limits of the East Side. He loved this country and he made it his business to study its history and institutions. He had a fine, a well-stored, mind, and his love of reading came in good stead in the long dreary months in Washington.

He knew his Socialism and the history of his party. Terrible days were ahead, when dissensions and disruption wrecked the movement that meant so much to him. There were times when he was torn between his duty to represent his party and his feeling that his party had made mistakes. He owed a duty to himself and to the hundreds of thousands of supporters of the cause to which he gave himself. And many were the problems that vexed him.

From March 4, 1915, the day he became a member of the House, onward, his years of preparation, study, thought and activity flowered in his Congressional career. In a certain sense his last eleven years consisted largely of his work in Congress. He was unable to give his time to the labor unions

after he took up his residence in Washington and after he left the House following the election of 1922 there was little left for him to do in the labor movement.

Therefore from this point London's biography is to a large extent the story of his work in Congress. In Congress London spoke for himself and his speeches reflect his thought, the fruits of his experiences and reading, and his idealism.

From this point London speaks for himself, frequently and at length. In that way the reader obtains a picture of the man and the problems he faced, and the manner in which he faced them.

The speeches are not chronological. The questions that came up in Congress gave London many an opportunity to speak, but often the same subject would come up again and again. The speeches are therefore arranged in the order of the subjects that attracted the Congressman's attention rather than in the order in which they were delivered.

The Socialist Party of the United States was emphatically, consistently and determinedly opposed to the war throughout its duration. It announced its attitude of opposition shortly after the nations of Europe arrayed themselves on the battlefield and it maintained that attitude after this country had decided to join in the fray.

On August 12, 1914, the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party issued a manifesto which declared (1) that the war had been brought about by "ambition-crazed monarchs, designing politicians and scheming capitalists"; and (2) that the "workers of the various nations involved have no quarrel with each other; that the evils from which they suffer—poverty, want, unemployment and oppression—are inflicted on them not by the workers of some other country but by the ruling classes of their own country"; and (3) that the "Socialist Party of the United States hereby calls upon all foreign-born workingmen residing in this country to hold mass meetings for the purpose of emphasizing the fraternity and solidarity of the working people, irrespective

of color, creed or nationality." In the same manifesto the Socialist Party called upon the national administration "to prove the genuineness of its policy of peace by opening immediate negotiations for mediation and extending every effort to bring about a speedy termination of the disastrous conflict."

Two days later the Party's national committee on Immediate Action published another manifesto urging upon our government the "seizure of all plants and industries responsible for the increases in prices," and other operations by the government for the benefit of the people, also demanding that the exportation of money and munitions of war to the European nations be prohibited. It explained that with the exportation of foods to Europe checked, the rulers of Europe, unable to supply their armies would be forced to call them home.

During the month of September the Socialist Party sought to prevail upon the Socialist parties of the warring countries to initiate a movement for peace. It first called upon those parties to urge their governments to accept mediation by the United States. Later it urged the convening of an International Socialist Congress, offering to pay the expenses of the delegates if such a gathering were held in Washington. In the appeal it said:

"We realize that you are victims of the present vicious industrial, political and military system. We appeal to you in the name of Socialism. We ask you to help us stop this mass murder."

In May, 1915, the Lusitania was sunk. This incident was the signal for an intense campaign of war propaganda against Germany. The Socialist Party reiterated its position in a new manifesto issued before the month was out.

"No disaster," it declared, "no matter how appalling, no crime however revolting, justifies the slaughter of nations and the devastation of countries." The manifesto concluded with an appeal to the workers:

"We call particularly upon the workers of America to oppose war and all agitation for war by the exercise of all the powers at

their command. Let us proclaim in tones of unmistakable determination; 'Not a worker's arm shall be lifted for the slaying of a fellow worker of another country nor turned for the production of man-killing implements or war supplies! Down with the war! Forward to international peace and the world-wide solidarity of all workers!"

About the same time the Party drew up a peace program in which it formulated the principles that became famous in the later war days in somewhat modified form as President Wilson's "fourteen points." It demanded peace without indemnities and annexations, disarmament, universal suffrage, abolition of secret diplomacy, abolition of the manufacture of arms for private profit, industrial democracy, international federation of the world.

In order to obtain the pledge of every party member to a militant opposition to the war the executive committee submitted to a referendum vote of the party members the following amendment to its Constitution: "Any member of the Socialist Party, elected to an office, who shall in any way vote to appropriate money for military or naval purposes of war shall be expelled from the Party." The amendment was carried by a vote of over 11,000 against less than 800.

This was the official attitude of the Socialist Party towards the war when Congress opened its session in December, 1915, and Meyer London at last took his seat as the lone Socialist spokesman in the House of Representatives thirteen months after his election. London's position was not an enviable one. There were rumblings of trouble underground, in his Party, in his constituency, and in the House where he was to speak for his party and for his district. The prevailing sentiment among the inhabitants of the East Side that had elected London to Congress was not altogether consistent with the sentiment embodied in the manifestoes of the Socialist Party. As a general principle they endorsed the socialist viewpoint on war, its causes and aims; but in this particular war many were blinded by passions that rose above principle.

Immigrants from Czarist Russia hoped for a Russian defeat and immigrants from Francis Joseph's Austria wished for an Austrian victory. The Russians here, mostly victims of oppression and persecution, saw in defeat the only hope for a revolution against the Czar and there was nothing for which they so ardently hoped and prayed. The Galician Jews, on the other hand, were too grateful for the decent attitude of Austria towards the Jews to wish that country harm. So, while the East Side condemned the war as a capitalist crime and as wholesale murder decreed by the rulers of all the nations involved, they were far from indifferent as to how the nations were faring on the battlefield and as to the possible outcome. The East Side was not exactly pro-German but it was definitely anti-Russian and to some extent pro-Austrian.

The situation in the Socialist Party was also becoming confused. Many rank and filers chafed under the restraint of the Party principles. Their families in their native countries were being destroyed by bullets and famine; their fatherland was wallowing in blood and in danger of annihilation. How could they be expected to withdraw into a revolutionary shell and refuse to show sympathy for their own? And even more outspoken were the native intellectuals who gradually fell prey to the skilful propaganda to the effect that the war was "all a German conspiracy against civilization."

The war propaganda and war psychology worked havoc in the ranks of the Party. Some weaker brethren deserted, some even turned against their comrades and joined the active enemies of the Socialist movement. The Socialist Party, however, was neither intimidated nor did it waver or equivocate. Steadfastly it stood its ground, fighting for its program and its principles.

And London, its sole spokesman in the national legislature, raised his voice fearlessly to expound and defend its demands. At first there was a handful of others in the body who opposed the activities of the militarists, but their motives and aims were different from his. London always spoke as a Socialist, always

called attention to the underlying difference in philosophy and viewpoint between himself and the members of other parties who happened to side with him in the final vote.

All circumstances were against him. He came from a district with a reputation for foreign ideas and for an aversion to what was considered Americanism. His constituency consisted mostly of immigrants. The air was charged with conservative and reactionary thought. The jingoes and militarists were moving rapidly to the fore. It was the period of militarist propaganda disguised by the name "preparedness."

Yet London felt perfectly safe, entirely at home in the House. His reading of American history, his spiritual communion with the noblest spirits of America's past, filled him with confidence in American fairness and democracy. His innate tact and courtesy also helped. He spoke his mind freely, spared no one. He never hesitated, never shirked. But the attacks, partisan and personal, that he directed against his opponents were never the central point of his speeches. He was always occupied with the problems, the facts and inferences. Partisanship and personality, if he indulged in them at all, were only added to carry his fundamental message across.

Two days after Congress opened its session London introduced a peace resolution. He asked Congress to call upon the President to summon a conference of neutral nations for the purpose of offering mediation to the belligerents of Europe. The resolution also outlined terms of peace for the proposed conference to consider, embodying the substance of the Socialist Party resolution of May, 1915. It read:—

> WHEREAS the people of the United States, while neutral, cannot be indifferent to the fratricidal conflict which is devastating Europe; and
> WHEREAS the longer the war is continued the more does the code of physical force replace every other code of human conduct; and
> WHEREAS the war has brought about a state of fear in the minds of millions of the American people which menaces

the normal development of this nation and beclouds the real issues which confront our generation by the artificial issue of preparedness against an invisible and unnameable enemy; and

WHEREAS a declaration by Congress in favor of an immediate conference of neutral nations will strengthen the hands of the President of the United States in his effort for international peace: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, called upon to convene a congress of neutral nations which shall offer mediation to the belligerents and which shall sit in continuous session until the termination of the war; and be it further

RESOLVED, That it is the judgment of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States that a durable peace can be established if the following principles shall be made the basis of discussion in said congress of neutral nations:

First. Evacuation of invaded territory.

Second. Liberation of oppressed nationalities.

Third. Plebiscite by the population of Alsace-Lorraine, Finland, and Poland, as to their allegiance or independence.

Fourth. Removal of the political and civic disabilities of the Jewish people wherever such disabilities exist.

Fifth. Freedom of the seas.

Sixth. Gradual concerted disarmament.

Seventh. Establishment of an international court of arbitration, with the commercial boycott as a means of punishment for disobedience.

Ten days later, on December 16, London made his bow to his colleagues in the House of Representatives and delivered his maiden speech. How it came about, the manner in which he spoke and in which it was received, are described by the Washington correspondent of the *New York Evening World*. The story ran under the caption "Meyer London Makes Hit With His First Speech in Congress." The story follows:—

Washington, December 17. Meyer London of the lower

East Side of New York, the only Socialist member of Congress, made his first speech yesterday afternoon in the House of Representatives and won for himself, because of his personality, his sense of humor and his brevity, an indulgent hearing and then generous applause, particularly from the Democratic majority.

In the midst of fierce debate over the war tax bill, in which only party leaders and veterans participated, Meyer London suddenly stood in the well of the House and raising his hand bashfully to the Speaker like a boy in school said, "I ask unanimous consent to address the House."

Representative Fitzgerald, who was in the chair, did not recognize London and asked who he was and what he wanted to talk about. Kitchin of North Carolina, the Democratic leader, Mann of Illinois, Republican leader, and dozens of members cried out "Who is he?"

"My name is London. I am from New York," replied the new Congressman.

"Oh! the Socialist," echoed the leaders.

Kitchin looked across the aisle at Mann, with a glance of inquiry whether London should be allowed to go on. "Let him speak. Let's hear him," came from various parts of the chamber. By all the rules and precedents of the House London was entitled to be heard. He was the leader of his Party although it consisted of one member. Mann nodded to Kitchin and the Socialist faced a crowded assemblage and began in a voice rather low, and his English with a decided foreign accent.

"I intend to vote for the resolution, despite the fact that it imposes a number of unnecessary burdens on the people," he said. The Democrats gave him a cheer. "I do not believe in the sincerity of the Republican opposition. It is sickening to listen to their worn-out cry of tariff, higher tariff, protective tariff." Again the Democrats gave him encouragement.

"I believe in an income tax," continued London, "but I also believe in an inheritance tax that would make it impossible for unfit men by the mere accident of birth to inherit millions of dollars in wealth and power." He continued for a few sentences more and suddenly broke off.

The audience wondered whether he had broken down for lack of words or courage. Then London gave a little laugh.

"I have said enough. I can do a great deal better than this and talk lots on the subject, but I won't to-day. I just wanted to explain my vote and I am much obliged to you."

He had spoken only three minutes. The House gave him a rousing, good-natured cheer. They told him he was "all right" and the "real goods" and by general consent Meyer London can have the floor and will have a hearing whenever he wants it.

A few months later "The Town Gossip," columnist of the *Detroit Free Press*, gave additional interesting details of the episode:

> In the reports of Congressional activity that come over the wire every day from Washington I noted with considerable interest the frequent use of the name of Representative Meyer London, and it recalls to me an interview I had with one of the most interesting men of the National Capital. I remember asking London for his impression of Congress. I reasoned, here was a man who during most of his political life had been attacking not so much the form as the practice of the American government. Did his actual participation in the machinery at Washington confirm his preconception? Evidently not. For this is what he told me: "Congress is sincere. I didn't expect much sincerity but I found a great deal. I found that many of the men who held views diametrically opposed to mine held them with a sincerity and an ardor that was astonishing. I remember when I made my first speech, one of the most extreme of the Republicans made his way across the House and peered into my face as if to discover what kind of a weird creature from some other world had found its way to this planet. That man evidently believed it was impossible for a sane man to hold views so widely different from his. There are scores like him in Washington."

CHAPTER XI

London Champions the Socialist Stand Against Preparedness and War

London threw himself into the fight for peace and against the agitation for militarism which was then sweeping the country under the guise of "national defense" or "preparedness." His first Congressional secretary, Laurence Todd, said later that when preparing his resolution London "sat up nights reading eagerly all he could get on the question of the readiness of neutral nations to intercede for peace." For London took his duties very seriously, and also had a generous estimate of the abilities and motives of the leaders of the House.

On January 18, 1916, he addressed the House on the two burning questions of the day—preparedness and peace. It was his first formal speech and it was a masterly presentation of the Socialist position on war and armament. It was both scholarly and statesmanlike, revealing deep understanding of European and American history. He was careful, however, not to ruffle the feelings of the adherents of one side or the other in the war. He spoke firmly but modestly. He sought to convince and persuade, not to quarrel or criticize. In the course of his speech he told his colleagues exactly how he felt.

> I consider it a misfortune for the Socialist movement of America that it has only one representative in this Congress to perform his duty as a Socialist. I feel extremely uncomfortable when after this service in Congress I have to force myself on the House. I feel as if I were imposing on you. But believe me, gentlemen, I am not inspired by any vanity nor any desire to hear myself talk. I hate the process of

talking. Talk is valuable only when talk is action. But I am animated and inspired by a solemn and faithful duty to express to you in the name of the Socialist movement in America and in the name of the international Socialist movement my abhorrence of and protest against the agitation for preparedness which will inevitably lead you into war with the nations of the world.

To present-day readers many of the views expressed in his speech are commonplace. Events of the past decade have opened the eyes of multitudes to truths that only a small group of Socialists and pacifists vainly proclaimed during the years of war. The peace program proposed in London's resolution is no longer the novelty it was then, for the Socialist proposals evolved into Wilson's "Fourteen Points" and became the basis of discussion among all the nations at the close of the war. But at that time London's was a lone voice crying aloud in the wilderness—or rather, in the jungle—arousing the wrath of the militarists, the war propagandists and the jingoes.

He continued:

> In all the parliaments in the world the Socialist movement opposed an increase of armament and pointed to the presence of large armies as a most serious menace to the peace of the world. There exists among the great masses of the people a notion that the present war is an accident. That somebody went crazy, particularly a certain ruler with a long military mustache; and that all is to be blamed upon that crowned individual. That is absurd. That is baby-talk. That is talk that we get from the headlines of the newspapers.
>
> Reason the thing out. Study it and you will find that this war is not an accident. This war is the direct result of a serious clash of economic interests of nations. It represents the struggle of nations, each of which is an economic unit seeking expansion, seeking free and full development. Poor little Serbia wanted access to the Adriatic so as not to be crushed by prohibitive tariffs. Russia with hundreds of miles of land frontier to one mile of sea coast, without a single warm water port, with a population of 190,000,000,

covering one ninth of the habitable globe, wanted to have a warm water sea port. That is a sensible and justifiable demand for a nation.

Germany with her wonderful civilization and culture—Germany with her splendid literature and philosophy, with her magnificent industrial development, with an intelligent, educated working class—Germany was seeking an opportunity for expansion. She wanted to increase her colonies. Her ambitions collided with those of Great Britain, who tried to retain the possession of her own wonderful colonies all over the world.

So the clash was not an accident. The moment the war began might not have been so soon, but the war itself was foreseen and it was inevitable, with great armies serving as the handmaids of industry. It was primarily an economic struggle, an outward expression of economic conflict. Of course it was a conflict in which other factors entered as they do in all human life. There are so many forces in the economic and political life of nations. There was in it the element of prejudice and race hatred; and every fool at any time can utilize national and race hatred for any vile purpose. There was national and race prejudice. There was a military caste in Europe; a caste brought up with the idea that everybody not in uniform is an inferior. Then there was Russia, with a vast population, three-fourths illiterate, believing that the White Father is a representative of God.

These things complicated the situation, but the primary cause of the war was the economic struggle of nations. And while it was an economic contest, gentlemen, it would not have been so dangerous if it had not been for the presence of vast armies and navies. When two men get into a fight, if they have no revolvers they do not fight with revolvers, but if they have revolvers and ammunition and large stores of explosives at the very moment when their interests collide, they will use the means they have at their disposal for destroying each other.

In all parliaments we protested against the war. The Socialists have no apology to make to history. The Socialists could not stop the war for the very simple reason that there were not enough of them. They did their best and they spoke honestly, not as jingoist patriots. I do not know—people talk about patriotism as something big. It is very

easy to be a patriot. Every fool can be a patriot. Every rogue can proclaim himself a patriot. Every blackguard can sing the national hymn and wave a flag. It takes a manly man to live a life of devotion and sacrifice for the best ideals of his country. That is the only kind of patriotism I recognize.

I do not know what Americanism means to others, but to me Americanism means not only an opportunity to do better than the rest of the world, but an imperative duty to be nobler than the rest of the world. The Socialists were the real patriots and well-wishers of the people as they everywhere opposed the war.

Now, gentlemen, I want to impress upon the American people the need of fighting the insanity of preparedness, with the sane, rational, insistent demand for international peace. That is why I introduced on the 6th day of December a joint resolution calling upon the President of the United States to convene a Congress of neutral nations to offer mediation to the belligerents of Europe.

The sentiments that I expressed in this resolution are not the products of my imagination. They are the results of the study of peace terms and peace conditions. They are the results of the study of the economic struggle of Europe. International Socialist congresses held before the war and during the war promulgated the same principles. My resolution presents a consistent, logical, intelligent method of dealing with the problem of international peace.

There may be some one who thinks that all this talk about internationalism is entirely out of place in this Congress. They are mistaken. Everything worth while, gentlemen, is international. There are national prejudices, there are national hatreds, but science is international, art is international. music is international, religion is international. All that you cherish in your religious system has been transmitted to you from past generations, from other climes, from other lands and other continents. Let us abandon this narrow conception of patriotism which consists of the doctrine "My country, right or wrong." There is a nobler doctrine, a higher doctrine, "My country must always be right."

The speech was followed by a passage-at-arms between London and the sponsors of militarism. His opponents ignored the

main argument raised by London. They tried to trip him with vague phrases about the flag and defense of American honor. London realized the meaning of this line of questioning; he knew it was an attempt to cast doubt upon his loyalty. In his answers he flung back the insinuation in the faces of his hecklers.

The hearing on London's peace resolution came up before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on February 24, and lasted two days. A large number of progressive organizations and labor unions sent their representatives to argue in support of it. Nothing, however, was done. Neither the committee nor the House took action.

London now became the spokesman of anti-war and anti-militarist groups all over the country. Over half a million copies of his speech on "preparedness" were distributed. Letters of congratulation and encouragement poured in on him.

On July 30, he received the following communication from Henry Ford's secretary.

"Mr. Ford has received a copy of your speech on preparedness delivered in the House on January 18, of this year. He wishes to thank you for it and will be pleased to use certain quotations from same in advertisements he proposes to publish, if you have no objection." To this London's secretary replied:

"Mr. London has no objection to the use of any parts of his speech on preparedness as quotations in Mr. Ford's advertisements, under the usual assumption that the object of the article in which the quotations are to appear is in harmony with that of the speech."

The American people were being pushed into the war from two directions. The President pressed his demands for neutral rights upon Germany, and Congress cried for larger appropriations for armament. In March, 1916, London addressed Congress on both of these subjects. His first speech he delivered on the 6th of the month in connection with a resolution which he had introduced a few days before. Both the resolution and the address seen in the light of later events reveal a deep under-

standing of the situation, a profound insight into the enigmatic diplomacy Wilson was then conducting. London perceived then what historians admit to-day: that Wilson's diplomacy was biased from the beginning, that while he was willing to suspend sentence for the violations England and France were committing against American neutral rights, he was holding Germany to strict accountability.

"We may say with absolute certainty," writes Professor Harry Elmer Barnes (*The Genesis of the World War*), "that it was the unneutrality, lack of courage or maladroitness of the Washington authorities in regard to English violations of international law which produced the German submarine warfare, that actually led us into the war. The gist of the whole matter, then, appears to be that Mr. Wilson failed himself to observe the neutrality he enjoined upon the country at the outbreak of the war."

This truth London perceived a year before the inevitable catastrophe had been reached. In his resolution he points this out. In the speech in which he expounded the resolution London pointed to the crux of the situation, the lack of democracy in international affairs. He called upon Congress to speak its mind on the questions involved in the diplomatic negotiations with Germany before it was too late, before the President led us into the blind alley of war from which escape would be impossible. He called upon Congress to act in a realistic manner, not as quibbling lawyers or cunning diplomats but as plain honest folk. He said:

> The great mass of the people are not interested in the quibbles of international law. After all, international law is more or less of a myth. It exists principally in text books. There is not a nation which has not disregarded elementary principles of international law whenever it suited its purpose, either in time of peace or in time of war. There seems still to prevail the international law, the good old rule, the simple plan that they should take who have the power, and they should keep who can. International law is a fraud

with which diplomats operate. The people do not understand this but they do feel that these disputes may lead them into the war.

First of all it is this apprehension that must be allayed. It is this fear that must be dispelled. We owe it to the world to declare that we will not waive any right of neutrals but that we will not resort to the use of physical force; that we will not employ the army and the navy to compel compliance with our view of international rights. We should adopt a clear declaration to the effect that we have no quarrel with the people of any European nation, that any disputes which we may have with the government of any of the belligerents shall be submitted after the passions of the war have subsided to the determination of a board of arbitration; that we refuse to resort to physical force as a means of compelling respect for our rights.

We cannot leave it to the President to carry on his diplomacy in secret according to his own will and conception.

Here London gave in a few concise sentences an excellent summary of the origin of secret diplomacy and of the present-day danger:

Secret diplomacy and the absence of democracy in international relations have been the curse of mankind. Diplomacy had its origin among the small Italian states and developed to its present importance when most of the nations of Europe were monarchies, in the government of which the people had no voice. The people had no say in determining the internal policy of the states and much less in determining their policy towards other nations. Diplomacy became an art. Had diplomacy consisted in telling the truth it is doubtful if it ever would have become an art. The diplomat was supposed to play the part of a spy and was regarded as one. While theoretically representing the nation, the diplomat in fact represented the sovereigns, their intrigues, their designs, their schemes. Strangely enough this notion of personal diplomacy representing the person of the sovereign has survived in our great democracy.

Democracy in international affairs means that Congress should guide the President in his diplomatic negotiations. It would

make it incumbent upon Congress to prescribe the limits of the demands and threats of the President in America's disputes with foreign powers. Acting upon this principle, London concluded his speech with a plea for the limits prescribed in his resolution, the limits being no war. He analyzed the character of the injuries sustained by us through Germany's violations of international law and he proved that it was either an injury of interest or of pride. An injury of interest means a loss of money which can be easily adjusted in an amicable manner. An injury of pride cannot be repaired by negotiation, but neither can it be repaired by war.

> There can be no such thing as offending national honor. One may offend national pride or injure national interest. Let us not confuse national honor either with national pride or with national interest. If a nation had failed to carry out its obligations to us it has not offended our honor, but it has injured our interest. There may be an injury to national pride. The attempt to punish a nation for an injury of national pride always assumes the character of a war of revenge. We cannot accept the code of revenge of honor. We cannot accept vendetta as our moral law.

The speech closes fittingly with a brief statement of international justice as understood by the Socialist movement. War will cease only when this code is adopted by the nations of the world and adhered to sincerely.

> The Socialist movement, in the name of which I speak, has in all countries and at all times opposed war, and anything that would lead to war. It has opposed oppression of nationalities; it has resisted imperialism and colonial conquests. It has opposed the maintenance of armies and navies. It has everywhere demanded that international relations be conducted in the open and by representatives of the people and it has insisted that every nation, no matter how small, be given full scope to develop its genius.
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> It has not hesitated to tear away the mask of hypocrisy which in the name of law enables the strong of each nation to grind its own weak. It brands as hypocrisy the interna-

tional law which permits the crushing of weak nations by strong. It has always contended for an international code of morality which would enable the nations of the world to live in peace and settle their disputes through international arbitration and not through the arbitrament of war.

In season and out of season I will urge the need of a higher code of international relations. In season and out of season I will repeat the warning of the Socialists—the warning that has been disregarded by the nations of Europe and for the flouting of which Europe is paying a heavy penalty to-day—the warning that there is no civilization worth while which is not based upon free men within each nation and upon free nations in the brotherhood of nations.

The second speech, delivered the 17th of March, was a fearless and merciless attack on the bill before the House for an increase in the standing army of 40,000 men. This was the first long step in the campaign of preparation of the country for "defense"—actually for war. The proponents of the measure stoutly denied that this was their aim. They avowed that they were working wholly in the interests of peace. In his speech London riddled these peaceful claims of the big army men and sounded a warning that the only purpose an increased army could serve would be to make war on other nations.

I suppose we all agree that the most charitable thing that can be said about the army and navy is that they are necessary evils. We do not want to increase the evil unless we must. In proposing an extraordinary addition to the army we must first determine whether the increase is essential for the defense of the national policy. It is not claimed that it is necessary to suppress internal disorder. The defenders of the need of a large army must convince us that the necessity and exigencies arising or about to arise from our international relations compel this disagreeable step.

Some say that a lesson of the need for preparedness is being taught by the European war. I draw an entirely different lesson from the war. The war was prepared for just as surely as an explosion is prepared for when enormous stores of dynamite are accumulated. It is the very maintenance of big armies that made the war possible, nay inevitable.

Will anyone dare gainsay that we would all be better off today if there had been no armies in Europe in August, 1914? As long as the conflagration lasts in Europe we will be talking preparedness here. It will require all the strength of strong men to resist the invasion, not of a foreign enemy, not of a great military force but of militaristic ideas. As long as the war continues there will be men among us for whom no army will be big enough, who will always want more preparedness, more of an army, more of a navy—and the more they will get the more they will demand.

We are told that war is inevitable, that it cannot be foreseen, that it comes with suddenness and that it is part of human nature.

There was surely nothing sudden about the present war. Was not Europe preparing for this very war for the last quarter of a century? War is no more inevitable than the plague is inevitable. War is no more a part of human nature than the burning of witches is a human act. Men succumbed to the plague because they were ignorant. Men burnt witches because they were ignorant. When men understood the cause of the plague, the plague became impossible. When men will understand the cause of war, war will be impossible. The United States has no one to fear. It is invulnerable against attack. It is not in the increase of the military establishment that we should place our hope for a greater and a nobler America. Unless we are determined to become a world power in the sense of competing with other nations by force of arms for the possession of markets and for the extensions of our colonial empire we need no increase of the army and navy. We are now a world power—a world power for good. The average American fails to understand to what extent the Republic has been a source of inspiration to all lovers of liberty all over the world. Let this Republic remain free from the contamination of militarist ideals.

It was now London against the House. When the army bill was put to a vote, providing for an increase of the peace strength of the regular army from 100,000 to 140,000 only two members voted in the negative. London voted "No" because he was opposed to any increase; Congressman Fred A. Britten of Illinois

voted "No" because the increase of a mere 40,000 was too trifling to bother with.

The Washington correspondents reported to the newspapers all over the country that only one voice had been raised against military preparedness as a national policy—that of Meyer London of New York, the sole Socialist member of Congress.

Again, when the navy bill which called for an outlay of $285,000,000 for building new war craft had been practically decided upon in the House, London obtained a few minutes on the Floor to lodge his vigorous protest.

> I congratulate the National Security League upon its success. I extend congratulations to the Steel Trust and to the manufacturers of ammunition. A splendid harvest awaits them; they have triumphed; they have aroused a state of hysteria which has proven irresistible. Congress has yielded and my voice of protest is a voice in the wilderness. If your policy is to maintain and defend the Republic against attack your present fleet is strong enough. It is sheer madness to fear invasion. If it is a policy of aggression, a policy of imperialism, a policy of competing with European powers in acquiring new markets, new colonies and domains, and in extending your commerce by the sword, then your fleet is surely not big enough and you had better vote to treble and quadruple it.

London's voice was indeed a voice in the wilderness. Appropriations for bigger armies and larger navies and more ammunition and fortifications were voted almost unanimously. The debates and divisions concerned only the size of the sums. Group vied with group to make them larger, but London never wearied of protesting; never tired of warning against the war mania which was spreading from Congress over the entire country. He saw the war impending like a doom and considered it his supreme duty as an American, as a Socialist and as a man to sound the alarm. Again and again he reiterated the Socialist argument as to the causes of war, as to the danger of armament and pointed out the only safe and sane way to peace.

The last session of the first Congress to which London had

been elected assembled in December, 1916, and continued until March 4, covering the period of President Wilson's peace message and the rupture of diplomatic relations with Germany, and adjourned a month before the President's policy pushed the nation into the war.

President Wilson called a special session of the next Congress to meet April 2nd and that Congress was asked by him to declare war against Germany. London's first term to which he had been elected in November, 1914, and for which he had been nominated before the shot of the Serajevo assassin plunged the world into madness and slaughter, thus continued up to the threshold of war. And he began his service in the Congress that had been elected to "keep us out of war," fighting against terrible odds.

During both of these sessions London delivered a long series of speeches on war and peace. He spoke on the President's peace message, on the revenue bill, on the army appropriation bill, on the bread riots, on the food emergency, on the question of armed merchant vessels and finally on the declaration of war against Germany. All these speeches harped on the same note—"war is murder, we must not commit murder." What he said in opening his speech against entering the war was indeed true.

> Mr. Chairman and gentlemen: I am sorry that I could not get myself to prepare a speech. I have spoken so often on the subject that my mind has stopped creating. I cannot argue with a man who favors war. War is incomprehensible to me. Nor do I hope that it will be possible at this moment to convince anybody. I feel, however, that I owe an obligation to myself again to state my position.

In this last supreme effort that London made to avert the catastrophe he threw aside forensic methods. He did not argue as a lawyer or a statesman. He pleaded as a humanitarian, as an idealist, as a moralist. He spoke of the crime and the sin of killing. He appealed to the conscience of his colleagues, begged them to forget for the moment their political interests,

to rise above them in the name of a higher and nobler interest. He tore aside the veil of words behind which the President sought to screen the real horrors of the act he recommended.

> The President says we had no quarrel with the German people. Of course we have not. The very same words were uttered by the British Premier in the parliament of England. And the British Premier meant it, and he was sincere about it. And the President meant what he said, and he was sincere about it. But while you wage no war today with the German people and while the nations of Europe had no war in their hearts, in July, 1914, it became a war of the peoples, a war of the nations themselves. With every fresh grave, with the crippled, the mutilated and the sightless returning home, hatred grew, bitterness grew until men became beasts. They ceased being Germans, they ceased being Frenchmen, they ceased being British. Through hatred they reverted to the brutal instincts of the savage and the worst animal of all animals is the human being who hates.

And then London sought to prove that the people were against the war, that they were raising their voices in the belligerent countries, and that the President himself knew it to be true in this country.

> The President referred to the Russian revolution. Nothing of greater importance has occurred in the last hundred years. The effect of the revolution is already being felt throughout the continent of Europe.
>
> For the first time since the inception of the war the German Social Democracy unanimously has voted against the military budget. Since the Russian revolution the Social Democracy of Austria has unanimously demanded peace. In every other country of Europe is now being heard a more insistent demand for a larger share in the participation of the people in determining international relations.
>
> The question was asked here, How do we know that the people are opposed to the war? Of course we know that the people are opposed to the war! And I hate to say I am afraid that the President himself doubts whether the people favor war. I should hate to say so, but that is the only implication which his recommendation for compulsory mili-

tary service carries. Nobody dares to speak of volunteers. In order that we should be able to get volunteers there must be a desire in the heart of the people to fight for the thing for which the President asks us now to fight.

London was ready to admit that the great mass of the people sympathize with the Allies. There were various reasons for that, historical, racial, and spiritual.

> But if we are to render aid to the Allies, why necessarily in the form of war? Why has no one thought of suggesting non-combatant aid? Why should we use the last and most desperate method, the unspeakable method of war, before we have tried other expedients? Why has not the President in view of the great wave of democratic thought on the continent of Europe again made his offer of peace? Why has not the President now again asked that the nations of the world make an effort to get together? Why should we not suggest a truce? Why should we not suggest a two or three months, stoppage of this slaughter, so that the representatives of the people of the free democracies of which he speaks should have an opportunity to get together and take up the question of peace and war?

London was willing to admit further that the German government had committed wrong against this country, but the war would not be directed against the government. The real sufferers would be the German people and they were innocent.

> It is an extremely ungrateful task for me to take the stand that I am taking now, but I would have no respect for myself unless I voted against the resolution. The issue is not between Germany and America. The issue is between two Americas—between those who believe that it is the mission of America to influence the world for the better by being a free democracy, by growing into a genuine democracy, by marching unhindered on the road toward nobler and more beautiful ideals, and the group of men who believe that the United States must follow in the footsteps of the European countries and adopt the jargon of European diplomacy about national honor and national dignity.
>
> Let us distinguish between the two Germanys. There is

the Germany of the Kaiser, the Germany of the landed aristocracy, the Germany of the Prussian militarist system and there is the Germany of Freiligrath, of Heine, of Bebel, of Liebknecht, the Germany of millions of Social Democrats contending for the very same ideals for which the American people stand. Unfortunately we cannot hurt the Kaiser without striking at the German people, without killing men whose ideals are ours, whose aspirations are the aspirations of the American people.

Gentlemen, perhaps it is not too late. Perhaps my voice is not a voice in the wilderness. Perhaps you will assert yourself and show the world an example of democracy for every nation to follow. The President has made a request upon the elected representatives of a free people to endorse the idea of war and every representative of the people should say, "No! I shall not kill! I shall not vote to kill! I am ready to suffer injury rather than kill! I shall not permit any one to vote that my arm should be stretched out to kill a fellow human being!"

Mr. Chairman, war is wrong, inexcusable, indefensible. Let us be strong men. Let us throw away our political ambition. Let us throw away our chances of reëlection. The people will ultimately do right. They will ultimately stand by every man who will show courage in this moment of crisis.

CHAPTER XII

Social Reform Measures

London's efforts in behalf of peace were the lesser part of his activities in Congress during the early months of 1916, the beginning of his services there. The greater part of his energy was devoted to impressing upon his colleagues the importance of social reform. In the month of February he introduced a resolution for the appointment of a commission to prepare and recommend a plan for the establishment of a national insurance fund for the mitigation of the evil of unemployment. He considered this measure of social reform entirely possible of realization and he went at it with all his might. In April he addressed the House on the subject and in May he conducted a two day hearing on the measure before the House Committee on Labor and he finally succeeded in getting the approval of the Committee on the appointment of a Congressional commission to investigate and bring in recommendations.

His speech on social insurance was preceded in January and February by two other speeches on kindred subjects, one on child labor and the other on industrial relations. Read together, these addresses present a comprehensive exposition of the socialist view of class struggle, the injustices of the capitalist order of society and the urgent steps needed for immediate relief of those sections of society who suffer most. The reforms recommended by London, the abolition of child labor and social insurance for the workers, have also been on the programs of progressive organizations that have not accepted the doctrines of Socialism. But there is this difference in the motivation as well as in the aims: London demanded these reforms not as an act of

mercy or charity but as an act of justice. He called upon society to "stop sinning" as he called upon the government to deal out justice. Speaking on the Child Labor Bill, he said:

> While I favor this bill I favor it merely as a step forward. When you regulate child labor you regulate a vice. By regulating a vice you retain it. The proper thing for us to do is not to regulate child labor but to eliminate it by making it impossible.

And he was not content even with that. Suppose we do prohibit child labor absolutely and entirely, have we thereby solved the problem? By no means.

> There is no attempt made in the proposed legislation to get to the root of the problem of the exploitation of the child. We legislate in driblets. Provision should be made to enable the child to be emancipated from the factory and mine, to obtain an education. A helping hand should be extended to the parents who have been forced to send their children to work so that they may adjust themselves to the change. There is too much sham, too much hypocrisy, too many crocodile tears about the present child labor legislation and entirely too little constructive action. We must eliminate child labor; we must educate the child; we must help the parent in his struggle for existence.

From the same angle of Socialist philosophy he approached the problem of social insurance against unemployment, illness and old age, as well as casualties while at work.

> Unemployment is not an accident. Not a rare thing. Not an occasional thing, but an incident of industry. It can always be predicted so far as seasonal industries are concerned. It is sure to come with application of every invention. It is sure to follow changes of the tariff. Every fluctuation in the world of commerce, every depression, every crisis, every change brings unemployment in its wake.

Society produces the causes of unemployment and society must meet the problem. Similarly, in the problems of the aged and the sick:

The man becomes too old for the purposes of industry when the ever-quickening processes of production make it impossible for him to compete in physical exertion with the younger man. The very term "superannuated" shows a cynical contempt for the dignity of a human being. It conveys the notion that the "superannuated" has had too many years of life, more than our anarchical system of society can utilize for the purposes of exploitation.

If industry were conducted with some regard for human life and not exclusively for profit an opportunity might be found for the "superannuated" to be useful in a service requiring less physical exertion and more suitable to the diminishing vigor of the man guilty of the crime of getting old.

The question, "What will become of the aged?" is no concern of the employer. All that the employer is concerned about is that his overhead charges will be increased if he maintains in his establishment a man who turns out less than others. Nor is the fact that some railroad companies and other large corporations have introduced old-age funds of much avail. When the private corporation establishes an old-age fund it practically says to the employee, "as long as you will be submissive during your days of vigor and virility; as long as our will be law for you in your days of youth and strength we will give you a little something when you reach the age of fifty or sixty, after fifteen or twenty or thirty years of continual employment with us." This is not an old age pension. This is a tuft of hay held out to a mule.

There is only one right way, one humane way, to cure this evil:

The worker should not be asked to assume all the burdens, all the risks, all the hazards of modern industry, with its accidents, occupational diseases, life-sapping intensity, with its sudden rushes and its long slacks, with its constant fears and anxieties. And in the end the worker will pay for it all. I know that the struggle for bread will continue to be bitter and that the emancipation of the masses can become a reality only with the abolition of the competitive system of society in which the propertyless are at the mercy of a class that controls the land and the means of production. It is

not so much the economic advantage—although that will not be slight—which will accrue to the masses at the introduction of a principle of ethics into industry; of a moral law into the sphere of life where the law of force rules today. Human society should be something more than a mere aggregation of bipeds each seeking to devour the other.

CHAPTER XIII

Justice for Porto Rico

The imbroglio with Mexico in 1916 found London again standing alone against a united front of Democrats and Republicans. When the President asked Congress for permission to raise the army to war strength for the purpose of sending an expedition to Mexico, London's was the only vote recorded in the negative.

A fortnight after that vote London spoke on the Mexican situation in general. By then the President's attempt to "get Villa" had proved abortive and the expedition had been recalled. London began his speech by pointing to this fact as proof that "I was right and you were wrong. The President now realizes that in the blundering treatment of Mexico no more serious blunder has been committed than this so-called punitive expedition." He then pointed to the dangerous consequences of a venture of this kind. "The present conflagration in Europe started with a 'punitive expedition' by Austria-Hungary against helpless Serbia. Look at the history of colonial expansion in the last half century and you will find that half of the wars were preceded by 'punitive expeditions.'"

At the beginning of May London rose in Congress to champion the cause of another weak people that was then resenting an act of imperialism on the part of the United States. The House was discussing the Jones bill to provide a civil government for Porto Rico. In the bill the franchise was limited to the educated classes and large tax-payers. The supporters of the bill admitted that these restrictions would disenfranchise three-fourths of the population.

London's speech on this occasion caused an uproar the like of which had rarely been witnessed in Congress. London was stopped in the midst of his talk and for a half hour or more the House sat in judgment as to how to deal with him, one of the members declaring "I wish I could make a motion to expel him from the House." London was finally given a chance to explain his remarks. And by a vote of 76 to 18 he was allowed to proceed unreprimanded and uncensured.

The burden of London's speech should have met with the whole-hearted approval of the representative body of a democratic government born of revolution. He argued that if the Porto Ricans were denied the right to vote they would be inevitably driven to rebellion and would be impelled to resort to violence. In the heat of his excitement, however, London couched his phrases so that they could be interpreted as justifying political terrorism and assassination.

According to the records as read by the Clerk of the House London said, "I say you assassinate the rights of these Porto Ricans by depriving three-fourths of these people of the right of franchise. And I will tell you what you are accomplishing; you will be the cause of organized insurrection in Porto Rico. Three-fourths of the working people who will be disenfranchised will have the right to use the revolver and will have the right to use violence and will have the right to kill governors. Do you deny to a man the right to express his views through civilized methods, through the medium of the ballot? He has the right to use every weapon in his command and every protection. The man whose vote you take away will have the right to put the knife of an assassin into the heart of any man who attempts to govern him against his will."

At this point he was called to order by Congressman Austin of Tennessee. The Speaker happened to be out of the chamber and he was hastily recalled. For a long time the members wrangled over methods of procedure. The Republican minority leader evidently desired to have the case postponed for a later

session to give himself time to act. This was prevented by Speaker Clark.

London was at last given a chance to explain his remark and this is what he said:

"I am extremely sorry that anything I have said is the cause of displeasure on the part of the membership of the House. It is evident that if the remarks as reported had contained two or three additional connecting words, that would have removed the objectionable feature of these remarks. As they stand it would seem that I advocated or suggested that when the voters of Porto Rico are deprived of their franchise they would have the right to use violence. The substance of my remark, the idea that I tried to convey to the House was this, that in all democratic countries men are given an opportunity to express their political convictions by means of the ballot, that in those countries where men are deprived of that opportunity they have to use other means and they do use other means."

He went on to explain that his words must have been taken down incorrectly by the stenographer.

"Stenographers are my enemies. I talk very fast. I walk up and down so that a stenographer has to be on wheels to follow me in order to understand everything I say. However, the long and short of it is this: I do not advocate the use of violence I am a Socialist. I believe in political activity. The greater part of my life has been spent in fighting the advocates of the use of violence. You have heard me again and again denounce the use of violence. I am a great believer in intelligence and love; love, intelligence and education are the great forces for the improvement of mankind."

This explanation was not altogether satisfactory to some of London's opponents and they demanded that he add an apology to his explanation and also consent to a withdrawal of the original remark from the Record. As to the apology, London said, "I think I have apologized." He also consented to the withdrawal from the Record. The House then voted by an over-

whelming majority that London be allowed to proceed. And he did, not at all weakened by the ordeal he had just been through. He said:

> By establishing the principle that only one-fourth of the people of Porto Rico shall be entitled to the franchise you re-establish the principle that property is entitled to a vote and not human beings. You know that after the adoption of the Constitution in 1787 many American States struggled for fifty years with the reactionary elements to remove the property qualification and that as late as 1842 in Rhode Island there was a rebellion known as Dorr's Rebellion. Do not be terrified by the word revolution again, please. You are sowing seeds of discontent. What other methods will the Porto Ricans find to translate their views into? What other means will they possess of giving expression to their desire, to their wishes and political convictions?

The question of Porto Rico was discussed again on the 20th and 22nd of the month, and London spoke on both occasions, demanding justice and democracy for the islanders. On the 20th he sought to amend the proposed law relative to child labor in Porto Rico. He said:

> The way the sub-division reads now it is absolutely worthless. It provides that the "employment of children under the age of 14 years in any occupation injurious to health or morals or hazardous to life or limb is hereby prohibited." Now, if you had at least said "The employment of children under the age of 14 years is prohibited" you would limit the hours of labor for children. But you do not do that. You qualify the prohibition; you limit the limitation. You are giving to Porto Rico child labor laws less progressive than you have in some of the States.

On the 22nd London reverted to the question of the franchise:

> The bill is both unwise and reactionary. Under the Spanish rule the Porto Ricans were governed by the aristocracy of birth. We are imposing on them the most despicable kind of aristocracy—the aristocracy of pelf. No matter how cultured or educated a man may be, unless he has accumulated

> taxable property of the value of at least $1,000, the proposed law will exclude him from representing the people in Porto Rico's highest legislative body. You seek to reverse the law of progress. What the American States have freed themselves from after long and painful effort you now seek to foist upon Porto Rico. As it is, wealth has tremendous advantage over poverty. You make the wealthy class so much stronger by conferring upon them the exclusive power of making the laws of the land. You divide the Porto Ricans into classes; one class is to make the laws, the other to obey. Such are the principles which the Congress of the United States promulgates in the year 1916. What a strange democracy! What a peculiar kind of Republicanism!

It seems that this most moderate statement analyzing political democracy aroused the insane rage of the same Congressman Austin who was responsible for the attack on London on the first occasion. This time the gentleman from Tennessee showed his teeth in an ugly snarl.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "this bill comes here with the unanimous approval of the committee of Insular Affairs, Democrats and Republicans alike. It has the support, the cordial support of the representatives of the people of Porto Rico in the House. It is satisfactory to the citizens and representative of the Porto Rican people. The gentleman who represents the East Side of New York ought to hold his peace." It was as ill-mannered a speech as the House had ever heard. It was meant as a taunt at London's race and was so understood.

For daring to defend a helpless people and a conquered island London was rewarded with abuse and threats by his own colleague. But the people for whom he suffered these humiliations appreciated his friendship. A few weeks after the battle was over London received the following letter from the secretary of the Socialist party in San Juan:

"Dear Sir,—I am instructed by our Insular Executive Committee to express our thanks for the generous defense in behalf of our people. Your activity in our behalf has been appreciated in

full. We all thank you. We are mindful of the interest taken by you who have dared to stand up and defend our rights as citizens and as human beings."

Similar sentiments were expressed in the Socialist press of Porto Rico. But the *Times* of Porto Rico, printed in English for the American exploiters of the island, characterized London's speech as "incendiary and bloodthirsty" and told its readers that "nothing like this language has been heard in Congress for many years if ever before."

CHAPTER XIV

The St. Louis Manifesto

The Socialist Party continued its opposition to the war even after war had been declared. Several days after the official declaration of war a special emergency convention of the Party convened in St. Louis. At that convention two resolutions on war were proposed. A majority resolution which received 149 votes and a minority resolution which received 50 votes. The majority resolution, which was later endorsed by a referendum of the party membership, declared as follows:—

"The Socialist Party of the United States is unalterably opposed to the system of exploitation and class rule which is upheld and strengthened by military power and sham national patriotism. We therefore call upon the workers of all countries to refuse support to their government in their wars. The wars of the contending national groups of capitalists are not the concern of the worker. . . The working class of the United States has no quarrel with the working class of Germany or any other country. . . . We brand the declaration of war by our government as a crime against the people of the United States and against the nations of the world. In all modern history there has been no war more unjustifiable than the war in which we are about to engage."

This resolution launched the Party upon a sea of trouble from which it emerged battered and all but wrecked. Some of its leading members deserted its ranks and turned against it. The Party became the target of abuse and attack by "patriotic" organizations and individuals who sought a safe outlet for their warlike zeal. The Party was denounced, its headquarters raided, its press suppressed, its members terrorized.

The eyes of the country turned to the lone Socialist in Congress. How would he act? Would he continue to fight for the principles of his party and earn the animosity of the jingoes who were then dominating the nation? Would he equivocate and compromise?

London's true nature was revealed in the manner with which he handled the situation during the next two years, the most trying, the most critical, the most confusing in his career. As the war clouds gathered, sanity and tolerance disappeared from the land. London found himself almost an outcast in the House where he had been welcomed by all and admired by many. He was watched by the press and whenever he spoke for his principles he was denounced as un-American and a traitor. But this public persecution produced no visible effect on his equanimity. He remained steadfast in his position, swaying neither to the right nor to the left. He did his duty as he saw it. He fought the battle for truth and sanity and morality, oblivious completely of the opinions and imprecations of others. He knew that in times like those every man must seek guidance in the depths of his own conscience. He did not always literally carry out the Party resolution; he knew he could not. He did not always please the extremists of one side or the other in his own movement. But he was always faithful to himself, to his own convictions, which had their roots in and drew their sustenance from a soil impregnated with socialist idealism and humanity.

He made no secret of the fact that regardless of his opposition to American entry into the war his sympathies were on the side of the Allies. And for that reason he did not vote against a measure for an issue of war bonds, but rather voted "present." He also voted "present" on the war appropriation bill, explaining that since the war was a fact he would do nothing actively to prevent the American soldiers from getting their necessary provisions. These and similar acts called forth vehement censure from the extremists in his Party. He was severely criticized by the same elements for giving public support to the war loan drives.

It must be emphasized, however, that these acts were only incidental to his main activity in Congress, which consisted of a fight against every proposed reactionary measure and the urging and demanding of immediate cessation of hostilities and the inauguration of peace moves.

On the very night the war was declared London introduced a resolution calling upon the President to make a new effort to get the combatant nations together in a peace conference. He based his argument upon events in Russia, where the Czarist dynasty had been recently overthrown and a republic proclaimed. This tremendous event affected the war situation both materially and spiritually. London asked the President to utilize the incident in the interests of peace.

A few weeks later London delivered a speech against the President's recommendation for a selective draft law (the conscription that had been foreshadowed when the war was declared). In it he condemned the war profiteers and called for a conscription of wealth.

> I would seize all the munition factories and make them government property and squeeze the profits out of the munition business for the protection of the people of the United States as well as for the protection of the Allies. I would take hold of the basic industries of the country and put them on a national basis, on a democratic basis, and lay the foundation for a democratic management of industries, one thing that is inevitable and is bound to come. I would conscript wealth and not men.

Then he satirized the moral sentiments with which the President had embellished his draft proposal.

> The President asks us to become revolutionists and organize a revolution in Germany. Well, there are better Democrats in Germany than there are here. Germany has millions of Social Democrats. They are doing their work for democracy. When they spoke for industrial peace they were told to stand by the Kaiser, as some people tell us here to stand by the President whether he moves forward or backward, whether

he is right or wrong. He calls upon the people of the United States to become revolutionists. Did you ever hear of conscripting a revolutionist? They talk about conscription as being a democratic institution. Yes; so is a cemetery. It is a democracy of the cemetery and the equality of the slaughterhouse. The volunteer immolates himself on the altar of liberty for an ideal, for an inspiration, for a principle. He fights, and in fighting for an idea a man lives. There is nothing nobler than a fight for something when it is a matter of choice, of impulse, of fervor, of enthusiasm, when it springs from the heart. That is the case with the volunteer. The volunteer is a rebel, a fighter for freedom, a martyr. A conscript is a lamb led to the slaughter, a victim.

This speech gave the jingoes their opportunity to spring upon the Socialists. London did not falter. His replies were brilliant and courageous.

Mr. James—The gentleman from New York and his Socialistic friends are against conscription. If Congress should pass a volunteer bill, would there be a wild rush from the Socialists to fight for their country?

Mr. London—There would not be a bigger rush from the Socialists than from the membership of this Congress.

Mr. James—I want to say that a good many members of this House have enlisted once and will be enlisted again.

Mr. London—The only man that I believe will enlist will have to talk to me in a uniform.

Mr. James—Then you will never have a Socialist talk to you.

Mr. London—The Socialists have been fighting for democracy while every corporation lawyer in the ranks of other parties has been serving the capitalists against the working people. We have been fighting for liberty throughout the world. We have been the fighters for international peace. Our men and women have voluntarily gone to the jails, to exile and to the scaffold fighting for democracy. And it is cowardly on the part of anybody to accuse the Socialists of a lack of courage.

Every new problem that the war forced upon the attention of Congress was seized upon by London as a theme for a Socialist

lecture. The war situation compelled the administration to resort to semi-socialist measures in regard to food and fuel and transportation. London had pointed the way many months before the administration realized that such problems existed. By December, 1916, the food speculators had created a food scarcity in the country which led later to bread riots in the large cities. It was then that London introduced a resolution for food control by the government. He spoke on the subject before the House but his efforts were rewarded with ridicule on the part of the influential members of Congress. However, six months later the administration called upon Congress to enact a law for the conservation of food and fuel. The government fell short of London's recommendation. It was satisfied with much less regulation and control but it was clear that London had anticipated the government by six months in sizing up the situation and calling for the proper relief. He did not fail to remind his colleagues of what had transpired on the floor six months before, when his turn came to speak on the food and fuel bill on January 20, 1917.

> I brought the problem to your attention after the so-called food riots in New York last December. I introduced a bill in which I demanded that the food supply of the country should be regulated and controlled by the people, for the people and through the people, instead of being controlled by private capital through capitalist lackeys and for private profit. When I brought up the bill, man after man got up here and said "Yes, perhaps there is a food problem but we do not know exactly what to do about it," and one of the most distinguished members of the House, one of the most brilliant and witty speakers on the Democratic side said, "I have a remedy to offer to the men and women in whose behalf the gentleman from New York speaks. Let them go to the farms, let them hear the cackle of hens and the grunt of the hogs and the lowing of the cows and the neighing of the horses down in our state."
>
> He wanted them to go to his state and become farmers, but he is what is called a Jeffersonian Democrat. Why the Jeffersonian Democrat assumes that Jefferson would not have learned anything from a century's experience I do not know.

> At any rate this sort of Democrat takes his wisdom from the grave. He opposed my proposition because he saw in it the menace of Socialism. The standpatters on the Republican side of course oppose any new idea and any new thought.

After pointing out the shortcomings of the government bill and how much better a thorough-going Socialist measure would have been, London concluded his speech with a plea for the general Socialist doctrine of government ownership and control of means of livelihood for all people and for all time.

> For the great mass of the people even peace means war. The battle of life is a very serious and earnest affair with most. For the great masses of the people to-day life is always filled with fear. The worker fears unemployment, old age and occupational diseases. The small business man always feels the fear of being crushed by a stronger competitor, by the corporation, by the trust. Theoretically free, the poor man whose wages are determined by the employer, whose rent is fixed by the landlord and the price of whose food and clothing is decided by the financial interests, finds himself nobody's slave and yet not a free man. That is as true of the agricultural worker as of the toiler in industry. It was estimated before the war that at least $1,100 annally was required for the support of a family of five. With present prices $1,100 are not worth more than $700 a few years ago. How millions of workers manage to live under these conditions is a mystery to me.

CHAPTER XV

Attacked by Extremists in the Socialist Party

On the whole, London's activities in Congress up to the time war was declared found favor in the eyes of Socialists and progressives in general. He was a striking success, surprising many by his excellent work. He was repeatedly praised in the Socialist press and liberal publications. His speeches in Congress were widely distributed for Socialist propaganda. From the very beginning of his term he made it a practice to come back at frequent intervals to his own district in New York, call together his constituents in public school auditoriums and explain to them what he did and why. At those gatherings of citizens he was hailed as a true representative of the people. The East Side was proud of its choice and took every occasion that presented itself to show it.

The crucial test came in November, 1916, when London stood for reëlection. The campaign was bitterly fought by Tammany, which was determined to win back its lost territory. On London's side were arrayed all the organized workers, all liberal-minded professional people, all the progressives among the small business men. London staked his political fortunes on his record in Congress. His campaign literature consisted chiefly of extracts from his Congressional speeches and opinions of them as expressed by the progressive and liberal press, not only in New York but all over the country. The nature of these opinions was reflected in the following extract from an editorial in the *New Republic*: "Although a solitary Congressman in his first term is crushed under the machine methods which control the House, Mr. London was a noticeable figure in the sincerity and depth of feeling and

in the intellectual distinction which he brought to debates on the floor and committee work. He was always listened to with peculiar respect by his colleagues and perhaps also with some sense of inferiority before the high and disinterested seriousness with which he looked upon his work as a legislator."

London was reëlected over a united opposition. This victory even more than the first was to a large extent a personal triumph. London had made good. He had made good as a Socialist of course, but it was his personality, the sterling qualities of his character and his intellectual distinction, that compelled attention on the floor of Congress and that won him the opportunity to defend his ideas and battle for his principles. The East Side reëlected London as an expression of its confidence in him, of its approval of the manner in which he served as its spokesman and behaved as its foremost citizen.

But even in those days of general approval there were underground rumblings. Extremists in the party found fault with certain phrases and implications in London's speeches. As early as March, 1916, we find Albert Pauly, executive secretary of the Kings County Socialist organization, writing to London as follows: "I am instructed by the local central committee to request you to attend a membership meeting of the Local. One of the points for discussion at the meeting will be the question as to whether or not the Local should distribute your speech on preparedness. No doubt you are aware of the fact that the Local decided some time ago not to distribute your speech on account of the stand taken by you when answering questions following your speech. The point objected to was your position that in case the people of America were attacked every Socialist would rise in defense of the American Republic."

The secretary further explained that the Local had adopted a resolution declaring that "The working class has no country to defend" and that he therefore considered London's words in Congress "unsocialistic."

A few days after Pauly's letter London received an even more

violent protest from a Finnish Socialist branch in Portland, Oregon. The letter was headed "To 'Our' Misrepresentative in Congress." What aroused the ire of London's Finnish comrades in distant Portland was a passage in his speech against increasing the army strength. In the course of that speech London warned the authorities not to employ the military forces against organized labor.

"If the National Guard continues to be used for the suppression of strikes," he said, "you will destroy all respect for the National Guard. People will look upon it as a strike-breaking organization and they will refuse to join it."

"The implication of this statement," says the Finnish protest, "is that it is London's wish that the National Guard loses not the respect of the people. Is this Socialism? Do we, the underdog, have any respect for the National Guard, or any other form of militarism? Is it our duty to look after the respect of the tools of the master class? We have no respect to be lost even for the mildest form of militarism. We condemn the joining of any militaristic body. To represent us, the members of the Socialist Party, in the way the Honorable London does it, is misrepresenting. We warn the Honorable London and all other intellectuals whenever they speak in the name of class conscious workers to beware of representing us as the supporters of any kind of militarism."

These rumblings went on for a year, gathering force as the country was drawn nearer to the maelstrom of the European war. While London was being denounced on the floor of Congress and in the press as a pro-German and an un-American traitor for daring to oppose the war and war measures, ultra-revolutionary Socialists belabored him at Party meetings for "betraying" the Revolution. London was harassed and attacked from both sides. Even the national heads of the Socialist Party were not always able to work in harmony with him. He often refused to obey orders. He displayed impatience with Party discipline. He acted impulsively and not always tactfully. It was a trying time for

him, but also for the Party, and the Party leaders were ready to forgive his minor transgressions for the soundness of his heart and the great service he was rendering the socialist movement.

It must be confessed that London really never approved the extreme language of the St. Louis Resolution. His opposition to the war was sincere and militant during the time when it was still possible to prevent it. He spoke against every attempt to drag the country nearer the brink. He was in communication with all progressive organizations that worked for peace. He addressed mass meetings called to protest against the declaration of war. He spared neither time nor effort in this struggle.

But the war had been declared. London now had to decide what to do to make his work most effective. Should he continue the vain struggle against the war? Should he continue his vain protestations, his vain attempts to undo what already had been done? Or should he rather seek to minimize the damage that war was sure to bring? Should he rather turn his attention to the victims of the war and help them? Should he turn his attention to the efforts that were being made to bring about a speedy peace and contribute his share? He knew that the first-mentioned line of action would gain the favor of what came to be known as the Revolutionary Socialists. But he also knew that it would make him a nuisance in Congress and render all his work ineffective, make his presence and labors in Congress useless. He decided upon the second course.

In an outspoken statement London explained his position. He wrote:

"We are dealing with a concrete fact. The war is on. The Socialists can do one of two things. They can say, 'This is not our war, we are opposed to war on principle, we refuse to kill, we refuse to recognize even a defensive war, we will make every effort to prevent the war from proceeding, we will obstruct the government in its operations, we will invite military defeat for the United States.' So far as I am concerned I reject this suggestion, not only because it is impracticable, unrealizable, and

would merely involve the sacrifice of idealists, of whom there is always a limited number, but because it is essentially wrong and immoral in a democracy like the United States. The Congress of the United States and President have been elected by the people of the United States. They are their representatives. If the people have no better representation it is the fault of the people and their rebellion would amount to a rebellion against themselves, and would add to the horror and calamities of a foreign war the still greater horrors and crimes of a civil war. This method, then, is out of the question.

"What is the next thing to be done? The Socialists can remain passive and can say, 'Well, I shall do nothing to promote the war. I cannot and I would not do anything to obstruct it. The war is not of my making. I shall bide my time until the people of the world ask an accounting of their government and begin to seek the why and the wherefore of the war.' While this is a way of doing things, so far as I am concerned it is of no particular attraction for me. I hate anything that is passive, that requires no activity, that permits things to go on without our participation.

"It has been a growing conviction with me that the Socialists must take a hand in guiding the forces released by the declaration of war, so that its sacrifices may be minimized, the stress relieved, the rights and liberties of the people retained and protected, and that some permanent contribution to the progress of the world may come even as a result of the war. In short I do not believe in ever giving up the struggle. What shall be our contribution in this process of remaking the world? Shall we stand aloof in the consciousness of our saintliness? Or shall we get into the very midst of the struggle for the supremacy of ideals? Preconceived notions, platforms, programs and politics worked out in times of peace, theories and proclamations elaborated by scholars and academicians, will not do. I hate to be condemned to inaction. I must participate in the work of the world, although some of it may be work of mischief."

CHAPTER XVI

Bouquets and Brickbats

As a result of this course London soon found himself involved in a controversy with his own party. On April 18, 1917, he cabled to N. C. Tscheidse, President of the revolutionary government of Russia, as follows:

"N. C. Tscheidse, Member of Duma, Petrograd, Russia. As the only Socialist member of the American Congress, hopeful that rejuvenated Russia will be a compelling factor for universal and lasting peace, I respectfully urge authoritative statement correcting disquieting rumors that Russian Socialists favor separate peace with Germany. Meyer London." London explained that his effort to prevent a separate peace between Germany and Russia was not made in the interest of the Allies but in the interest of the Russian revolution and universal peace.

This explanation did not conform to the official policy of the Socialist Party, which was opposed to war without qualification. Two days later Morris Hillquit cabled Tscheidse in the name of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party the following:

"Cable of Meyer London not authorized by Socialist Party. American Socialists have supreme faith in the ability of the Russian comrades to solve their own great problems in furtherance of peace, democracy and international socialism."

It is to be noted that the Socialist Party was then largely under the influence of the left wing that two years later broke away to form the communist movement. These left groups carefully scrutinized every utterance of London's and every act of his in

the light of revolutionary socialism and demanded that he be held to strict accounting for every error willfully or otherwise committed. At a state committee meeting of the New York Socialist Party, held in Albany on May 16, these left groups put through a resolution containing a mild rebuke to London. It expressed "deep regret at Congressman Meyer London's action in voting for Champ Clark for Speaker of the House and also for voting 'present' on the seven billion dollar war loan." The left wing had demanded a much stronger censure, but this "expression of regret" was all they could get from a majority of the delegates, who were very reluctant to interfere with what they considered London's admirable work, even if some of his acts did not meet with their complete approval.

London obeyed his own conscience. The National Committee of his Party called upon him to introduce a bill for the repeal of the Conscription Law. For months the secretary of the Party wired and wrote him about it, as did also many Socialist locals all over the country. London gave no heed to their demands and appeals. He felt that no good would come out of such a motion.

The acute stage of the struggle was reached during the fall and early winter of 1917. In October the Socialists conducted a stormy campaign in New York with Morris Hillquit as candidate for Mayor on an anti-war platform. Pacifists and war oppositionists of all kinds flocked to the Socialist banner. The campaign gathered momentum, and with the increase of Socialist sentiment, speakers on the Socialist platform grew bolder. Those belonging to the left wing began talk of revolution.

London then entered the arena and sounded a note of warning to his own public. At Socialist campaign meetings he admonished the more radical leaders. At one of these meetings he said:

"We Socialists must not be demagogues. We must not appeal to ignorance. It is utter nonsense to say that if a large Socialist vote is polled the war would stop. This war cannot be declared ended until we have some sound basis for a universal peace. . . It is nonsense to say we are indifferent to the outcome of the

war now that we are in it. . . . When the Czar was pitted against the Kaiser we hoped for a draw; but the position of things has so changed that the Socialists cannot afford to hope for the war to end until Belgium is restored and until every German soldier has been removed from the soil of revolutionary France. Socialism must win and carry the message of international solidarity throughout the world. But I don't want any vote cast for the Socialist Party this year to be misinterpreted by the Kaiser."

New York daily newspapers published sensational reports of the opposition to London in the Party. The papers hinted that plans were being laid to expel him from the organization. *The New York World* wrote editorially: "Representative London, it is evident, is no Socialist according to the New York standard." A syndicated editorial that appeared in newspapers all over the country said, "Congressman Meyer London is now exposed to expulsion from his Party." All sorts of rumors were set afloat about the impending break between London and the Socialist Party. It seems that even the heads of the organization found it hard to remain indifferent to the rumors that were being broadcast. On December 12, 1917, London received a communication from Adolph Germer, the Party's National Secretary, containing the following passage:

"I have just been informed that one of the Finnish papers carries the story that you have resigned from the Socialist Party on account of alleged disagreement with its policy. In these stirring times when so many reports are sent broadcast we are discounting this story one hundred per cent."

London's own local organization, the Socialist Party of New York County, finally took a hand. It invited him to a specially called meeting of Party members to explain his position on the war and on national and international problems connected with the war. This meeting was probably one of the worst ordeals London had to go through for his war stand. He had to listen to savage attacks from members of his own Party. He heard himself denounced and called upon to resign from Congress.

London listened to all his critics had to say and answered, speaking twice. His first speech lasted an hour and a quarter and his second half an hour. He was as frank in confronting critics in his own ranks as he was in meeting them in Congress.

In his speeches he pointed out that the St. Louis Resolution was inadequate as a program for active Socialists. The St. Louis Resolution, he argued, failed to recognize the fact that the war existed. Citing the constitution of the Socialist Party, he claimed that he was fulfilling his duty by merely abstaining from voting on military measures. The constitution forbids a Socialist representative to vote in favor of such measures. It does not command him to vote against them.

"You wanted me to introduce a bill for the abolition of the draft law. But I know that you could not agitate for such a bill. There was not a shadow of a chance to get such a bill passed. You wished to place yourself in a position where you could accomplish nothing. The country is at war and you act as if nothing had happened. You represent a tendency and not a movement."

The New York local at last realized that it could not prevail upon London to change his position and it called upon the National Committee to consult with him and map out a plan of action by which he was to be guided.

London's mail in those days was filled with letters of praise and censure. Sons and daughters of old American stock commended him for his stand upon the war, whereas immigrant Jews of the first generation upbraided him for "giving the Jews a bad name." For, in spite of the opinions of the lefts in the Socialist ranks, the country at large knew London as a valiant opponent of war, as an anti-militarist and as a mighty fighter for the cause of peace. Whatever opinion ultra-revolutionists might have had of London's shortcomings as a Socialist, the country at large believed that he was a thorn in the sides of the jingoes and militarists. And this called forth praise from liberal intellectuals but admonition from nervous Jewish immigrants.

Typical of the letters showered upon London from the two groups are the following:

From a dean in one of the leading universities:

"I beg to express my appreciation, which I believe is shared by more than half of the people of the country, of your efforts to prevent war. Lord Morley, Mr. Trevelyan and Mr. Burns are respected for resigning from the British Cabinet when it decided to enter this mad war. And those members of Congress who have worked and voted for peace will in the future be honored for their courage and their wisdom."

From a scion of an old aristocratic family in Cambridge, Massachusetts:

"I desire to write you a word of commendation and encouragement for your true American patriotism in voting against war. I am not pro-Ally or pro-German. I stand for the traditions of America as they were believed in by all our people up to 1914."

And here is a curious one from a pious Christian woman, written on the even of the declaration of war:

"Will you, as a Jew, standing for everything that is righteous, appeal to the Christian men in the House of Representatives not to bring criticism upon America by declaring war in Holy Week? This is Holy Thursday, tomorrow Good Friday, and Sunday is Easter. Wait to declare war until after the Easter anthems are sung. Peace on Earth; Good Will Towards Men."

From California came this expression of appreciation:

"It is a satisfaction to know that Congress has convened with the thought of peace in somebody's mind at least, and that you have as promptly introduced a constructive resolution towards that end."

And this from the prairies of Iowa:

"I read the accounts in the daily news-account of the recent declaration of war with Austria and note that you were the only one in Congress to vote in the negative. I am and my people have been for generations American laboring people. I am not pro-Germany nor pro-Austria but pro-America. And as a real

American I wish to thank you for your stand against the war."

And typical of the other kind of letters is the following from a Jewish physician in Chicago:

"Allow me to ask you this question: what gratitude do you and your ilk show the countries which allowed you not to be robbed of your rights, of your home as a Jew and revolutionist, while a Scheidemann refused you both, with the addition of exploiting you as a 'schwein' during your transit through his fatherland? I take the liberty of writing you, although not one of your constituents, because you represent more the Jew than the Socialist."

CHAPTER XVII

Nationalism, Zionism and Socialism

The point raised in the letter from the Chicago physician was destined to bring much trouble to Congressman London. Political opponents from the East Side had been vainly looking for an issue against him for the coming campaign. Now they found one which seemed made to order for them. Whispers began to be heard that London was exposing the Jews of the East Side, and incidentally all immigrant Jews, to the stigma of disloyalty. They raised a cry that London's radicalism and anti-war speeches would breed anti-semitism in the one country that had been a real haven of refuge to the Jews. To prove that this danger actually existed they quoted from the many editorial attacks in the American press against the immigrant Jews for sending to Congress the man who "stood out against America in the moment of her greatest peril."

This newly invented issue that London was a menace to the Jewish future in this country was aggravated by charges that he was un-Jewish and that he misrepresented the attitude of American Jewry towards the national aspiration of the Jewish race in Congress and before the American people.

The problem of Jewish nationalism, its meaning and its practical program, had been the cause of a long-standing dispute between two groups of the Jewish Socialists, workingmen and intellectuals. The quarrel in a sense originated in Russia after the simultaneous birth of the two Jewish movements, Zionism and Bundism, in the late nineties of the last century. Each of these movements had as its aim the national preservation of the Jewish people. The Zionist wished to see this ideal realized by

securing an autonomous Jewish political state in Palestine, the ancient Jewish homeland. The Bundist hoped to realize it by socialist revolutions in the countries where Jews dwelt in considerable numbers. Both movements were equally opposed to the tendency of the wealthier Jewish classes towards becoming assimilated into the general population. They insisted upon the principle that the Jews were not merely the devotees of a religion, but a nation.

The position of the Zionists always has been that, in order to perpetuate this national entity, in order to prevent it from decaying through the assimilative processes of life, a Jewish state must be built. There, in its own territory, living an independent national life, the Jewish people would not only preserve but also develop its national genius. And this national nucleus in the home state would radiate national energy to the scattered remnants of the nation in exile in foreign countries and counteract the menace of assimilation.

The Bundists rejected the Zionist ideal on grounds both ethical and practical. They argued that Palestine would never be restored to the Jews, but that even if the improbable happened and the land were turned over, it would be physically useless for the purposes of colonization. They also argued that it would be wrong for the Jews to displace the present inhabitants of Palestine or to subdue them politically, The Bund was a Socialist organization and it believed that the general order of society would in the future be an international of industrial democracies. Each nation would be a commonwealth of citizens working together for the common good, and all nations would be bound together for mutual help and cultural advancement. In this new Socialist order every national group in every country would have full autonomy in cultural matters. The danger of assimilation would disappear, for like every other social evil, assimilation springs from material causes. The Jew permitted himself to become assimilated into the general population because of economic necessity.

As a Jew, he was handicapped in the struggle for existence, hence his eagerness to adapt himself and amalgamate with the people among whom he lived. Economic necessity was the fire under the melting pot of races living together in one land. Let this corrupting flame be extinguished and each race would remain faithful to its own traditions and culture. And the Jew would not be an exception to the rule.

Of course not all the Jewish Socialists were Bundists and not all non-Socialist Jews were Zionists. It would take us too far afield to go into a discussion of the many factions, groups and wings into which the Jewish people were divided on these questions of socialism and nationalism. In general, however, it can be said that on each of these two problems the Jews were split three ways. There were "assimilative" Socialists, those who believed that Jewish nationalism should be entirely ignored and all energies concentrated upon the success of Socialism; the Bundists who maintained that Jews should work for a socialist state as Jews and make their national preservation a part of the struggle; and Zionist Socialists, or Poale Zionists, who believed that the Jews could be both Zionists and Socialists and devote part of their energy towards bringing about the social revolution in the lands in which they lived and a part towards the building up of a Jewish state in Palestine, if possible on a socialist basis.

The non-socialist Jews also split in three ways. One group held that the Jews were only a religious sect, nationally identical with the people among whom they live; a second group believed that the Jews could retain their national identity in the countries of the Diaspora; and the third group held that the only solution of the Jewish problem could be found in Zionism.

From the very beginning the middle-class Jews of Russia inclined towards Zionism and the working class adopted Bundism. Each of the two movements sought dominance in community affairs. The battle was fought in the fields of politics, culture and social life. The vanguard of the Zionists in this struggle were the Zionist Socialists, the Poale Zionists. Intense indeed were the pas-

sions engendered by this factional struggle that raged for many years throughout the Jewish pale of Russia.

The situation in this country was entirely different. The intellectuals who preached socialism to the immigrant Jews in the nineties belonged to the "assimilative" school of Socialists. The problem of preserving Jewish nationalism never presented itself to them, for they were not interested in it. They visualized the future socialist society as one in which race lines played no part. Questions such as the development of the Jewish language or the spreading of Jewish culture which were so vital to the Bundists in Russia were non-existent to the Jewish Socialists here. While the Bund in Russia was a distinct Jewish Socialist party, with its own program and its own declaration of principles, the Jewish Socialist movement in this country consisted of branches of the American Socialist Party, which called themselves Jewish-speaking sections, conveying the idea that they were one with the national body except that they transacted their business in a language other than English.

In spite of the different attitude they took on the question of nationalism the Jewish Socialists of this country considered the Bundists their comrades, their nearest of kin, of the same revolutionary flesh and blood. The American Socialists admired the Bund for its revolutionary record, for the zeal, heroism and martyrdom of its adherents. Of these activities they were told in the Socialist press and from the Socialist platform. The great mass of workers in this country learned to love and revere the Bund as a great revolutionary and Socialist organization that their comrades had built up in Russia.

The great tide of immigration after the failure of the Russian revolution of 1905 and 1906 brought a large number of Bundists and a smaller number of Poale Zionists and conservative Zionists to the United States. The Bundists readily joined the ranks of the American Jewish Socialists. For a while the old-world battle between the Bundists and the Zionists was renewed here, but it did not last long. Somehow the masses in this country were not

aroused to any interest in the question of nationalism. The Poale Zionists failed to convince the people that a Jewish state in Palestine was important to them, and the Bundists failed to convince their listeners that those who entertained thoughts of a Zionist state were enemies of the proletariat and traitors to Socialism. But while ignoring the question of Jewish nationalism, the Jewish working masses here continued their allegiance to the Bund.

Meyer London shared the opinions of the older Socialist leaders of this country on the question of nationalism and Zionism. For the Bund he entertained the warmest affection and the Bund looked upon him as its big brother in America. But this mutual attachment was born out of purely revolutionary and socialistic sentiments. To the nationalistic aspect of the Bundist program London gave little or no attention. The Zionists and the Poale Zionists London hardly ever discussed. He probably never considered them of any importance.

In the campaign of 1914 London's attitude towards Jewish nationalism was hardly mentioned. He was endorsed wholeheartedly by the Poale Zionists. The belief prevailed that as a Congressman London would have no occasion to act or even to speak on Jewish problems. In America no such problems existed and nobody could foresee that such problems would ever arise here.

However, the Jewish question began to loom on the American horizon during the second year of the war. At first the problem appeared in a commonplace form and looked the same to all Jewish eyes. It consisted of the fact that Jews were suffering privation and persecution in the war countries and it was incumbent upon American Jews who had been spared the agonies of the war to come to their assistance. Later, however, the problem became more complicated. The Jews in a number of the warring countries had been living under political, civil and religious disabilities. During the war these countries called upon their Jews to shed their blood upon the battlefield; and the Jews responded bravely. They now demanded equal rights, to which

they had established just title upon the battlefield, and they appealed to the Jews of America to help them gain their demands, for the American Jews were supposed to be powerful and influential, and in a position to aid their weaker, poorer and persecuted brethren. Hence European Jewish problems became an American issue.

The second phase of the problem revealed the first traces of disagreement among the American Jews. Which rights should be demanded? Political, religious and social only, or national and cultural as well?

Before this difficulty was solved a new one, even more complicated, more formidable, arose—the question of Palestine, of a Jewish homeland in the Holy Land.

London was again put to the test and again he acquitted himself most courageously and most honestly. He did not yield to clamor nor did he shrink from threats. No two Jews agreed as to the correctness of his position, but no one disputed his sincerity and consistency. He acted according to his convictions, ignoring the urgent advice of many of his friends to compromise.

In the peace resolution that London introduced in the House at the opening of the session he took cognizance of the Jewish problem. Among the peace terms outlined in that resolution is one reading, "Removal of the political and civic disabilities of the Jewish people wherever such disabilities exist." This demand was not entirely satisfactory to the nationalist Jews, particularly the Zionists. The war acted as a stimulant to the nationalistic aspirations of small and oppressed nationalities, and the Jews were no exception to the rule. The Zionists in the Allied countries, where self-determination was fervently promised to all oppressed people of the enemy empires, clamored for a Jewish Palestine. The Bundists on their part organized the working masses in a movement for national rights for the Jews wherever they lived. Both groups were organizing and marshalling their forces for the end of the war, when the governments were to deal out justice to all nations and to all races. In this preparatory work London,

the sole representative of Jewish New York, was expected to do his share. He had a seat in Congress, his voice would carry weight with the people and with the government.

In April, 1916, the editor of a Jewish daily, a Zionist, requested London to make his position clear on the following question: "What would be the most practical way of solving the Jewish question abroad in the readjustment that is to come after the war?" The editor was careful not to put his question too bluntly. But London understood that what he was after was a statement on Jewish nationalism and Zionism. In his answer he told just how he felt on these problems. He wrote:

> The Jewish question must be dealt with frankly and honestly or not at all. It is self-evident that the removal of the political and civic disabilities of the Jewish people will enable the Jew everywhere to become the maker of his own destiny. Whether we are nationalists or not, whether we believe in assimilation or not, whether we are religious or not, I deem it a duty of the Jew everywhere to remain a Jew as long as in any corner of the world the Jew is being discriminated against. To this extent I am a Jewish nationalist.
>
> I am not unmindful of the fact that there is a division among the Jewish people themselves and that there is among them a distressing confusion both of thought and sentiment. The great masses of the Jews in all countries of the world prefer to be a part of the people among whom they live. We speak with pride of the intense love the French Jew entertains for France, the German Jew for Germany, the English Jew for England. Even in unfortunate Russia the Jew loves the land of his birth. So far as the United States is concerned, I doubt whether there is any other element that has such a deep and genuine love for the country. Not only the native Jew but the Jew who has adopted this country as the land where he will die and where his child will live has profound love for America. The removal of political and civic disabilities is essential not only to the Jew in those countries where he suffers disabilities; it is essential to the Jew everywhere. As long as we are treated as though we are less than men in any country of the world it has a disastrous effect upon the Jew everywhere else. Our primary concern, then, must be to

urge, whether it be at a congress of neutral nations or at a congress of the European nations at the conclusion of the war, the removal of the political and civic disabilities of the Jews wherever such disabilities exist.

But while we urge the removal of political and civic disabilities we should not disregard the fact that there is an element among the Jewish people with distinct separatist, nationalist ideals—there is the element which hopes for the restoration of Palestine, the old, historical home of the Jew. These would make Palestine a state and a sovereignty under some sort of a protectorate of the great nations. There is the element which seeks the establishment of a Jewish home in a separate territory. There is again the element which would like to see the establishment in Palestine of a spiritual home which would not demand of the Jew a divided allegiance. There is another group which demands cultural autonomy. While the removal of political and civic disabilities is the primary and essential thing upon which all Jews must agree, I would urge that these various tendencies among the Jewish people receive due recognition.

This last sentence is somewhat vague. London did not consider the question of Palestine of practical importance. It did not seem to him then that he would ever be called upon to act upon it in his capacity of representative in Congress. And he passed over it in a rather non-committal manner.

The Zionists were not satisfied. When the campaign of 1916 approached, the Poale Zionists made an attempt to force London's hand. The Executive Committee invited him to a conference "to talk over your attitude towards certain questions relating to the campaign." London's reply betrayed characteristic impatience: "My attitude toward all public questions should be well known to your committee. No conference with any committee will change my attitude on any of the big questions before the country to an attitude different from the one that a Socialist representative should assume."

The Poale Zionists gave him reluctant support in that campaign. London's opponent, Judge Sanders, the Tammany candi-

date, who was active in a number of Jewish organizations, hoped to get active help from the Zionists and nationalists, but he was disappointed. He tried to make his chief issue London's lack of Jewishness, but it failed to impress. London received the overwhelming vote of the Jewish citizens of the district and was returned to Congress.

To London's arduous tasks as Congressman was now added a new duty, that of helping in Jewish relief work. He was elected chairman of the People's Relief Committee, an organization of Jewish workmen, to raise money to aid the Jewish war sufferers. He took an active part in the extended controversy over calling a Jewish Congress and was instrumental in finally uniting the factions in common support of the Congress. His frequent appearance on the platform in connection with these purely Jewish activities caused him a good deal of annoyance. He spoke his honest mind and it did not always meet with general approval. He was as impatient with the Jewish jingoes as he was with the American jingoes. At one of these relief meetings he expressed his annoyance a bit too sharply. He cried out, "Let us stop pretending about the Jewish past and let us stop making fools of ourselves over the Jewish future." This remark gave him no end of trouble. The Jewish press, both English and Jewish, published protests from readers and called upon London to explain his "insult" to the Jewish people. Some wrote to him personally. This incident occurred shortly after his reëlection in 1916, and it was not completely forgotten two years later when he stood for a third term.

On November 2, 1917, the Right Honorable Arthur J. Balfour, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the British government, issued his famous Declaration favoring the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people. In the course of the following few months the Balfour Declaration was endorsed by the French and Italian governments. This placed Zionism in a preferred position in the Jewish community. It seemed at last that a Jewish political state had a better chance of realization

than the removal of Jewish disabilities in backward countries. The Balfour Declaration also awakened Jewish pride in many a heart where it had long lain dormant. In the course of the next year the Balfour Declaration gained the enthusiastic endorsement of the two most powerful international unions of the Jewish workers of this country, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers. A resolution of endorsement was also passed by the American Federation of Labor. Thus Zionism emerged from the realm of hope to actual realization.

It was expected that as representative of the most distinctive Jewish district in America, Meyer London would be the first to urge the American government to give its support to the Balfour Declaration. But London did nothing about it. And it was justly surmised that he was out of sympathy with a Jewish political state. The Poale Zionists who had been willing to overlook his "assimilative" attitude two years before refused to do so now. For the moment Zionism loomed much larger, much more realistically, than Socialism or even social reform.

In August, 1918, the Poale Zionists put to him point-blank the following questions:

"(1) Will you introduce a bill in Congress or will you support a bill that the Congress of the United States shall endorse the declaration of the British government as to the establishment of a Home Land for the Jewish people? (2) Will you introduce a bill or support a bill that the peace delegation of the United States shall at the peace conference defend or assure the granting of civil, political and also national rights for the Jewish people in countries where they live in compact masses and where national rights guarantee also individual rights as in Austria, Poland, Rumania, Russia, and so on?"

In order to make London realize the price he might have to pay for an unfavorable reply the letter closed with a covert warning:

"We expect to get your answer within the next ten days in order to enable us to begin preparations for your campaign. We

trust that you will not delay the reply for it may create the impression that this letter may remain unanswered."

The reply was not delayed but it was not satisfactory to the Zionists. London wrote:

"I am decidedly in favor of presenting to the international peace conference for solution, with due regard to the principle of self-determination and to the principle which forbids forceable annexation, the question of securing a free state to which such of the Jewish people as desire to do so may return and may work out their own salvation free from interference from those of alien race or religion. It goes without saying that every form of disability must be removed."

The Poale Zionists wrote back asking for a more explicit statement.

"Your communication does not fully comply with the courteous request of the committee. Your answer is too general and makes it impossible for them to conceive beyond any shadow of a doubt what stand you will take pertaining to those problems which are touched upon in our previous letter."

In a second statement London did speak more explicitly.

> I have not changed my attitude on the Jewish question. I represent in Congress not only a geographic section of the United States but a portion of the people of the United States. The Jew of America looks upon America as the land of promise. To him it is his home land. Here he is free to pursue his spiritual ideals without hindrance. I do not believe in a divided allegiance. I do not believe that America can permit itself to be divided along lines of nationality, race or religion. No matter what a man's religion or former nationality or racial origin may be, unless he is willing to be a part of the American people he is a stranger. So much about the Jew in America.
>
> I have emphasized on more than one occasion that international Socialism by its very term implies the existence and coöperation of nations. If there are Jews who want a home land of their own and who believe that the Jewish people cannot accomplish their mission in the world without living

> a separate and distinct national existence fortified by a Jewish state, they are welcome to it. All that I ask of them is that they should not be speaking in the name of all the Jews. Then they will be within their rights. These men will then have a right to present their claims to the international Socialist movement and to the governmental peace conference. If their aims can be accomplished without violating the Socialist principles which forbid forcible annexation, no Socialist can afford to object. It is in this light that I would treat any resolution that may come up in the American Congress.

London thus, because of his intellectual honesty, alienated an element of support which was then of greater importance than it had been in the past. His friends exerted themselves to bring about a reconciliation before the opening of the campaign of 1918, but London refused to compromise on matters of principle. He even refused to act or speak "diplomatically." He did not know how.

CHAPTER XVIII

Reaction in America

In the wake of the declaration of war came a procession of reactionary laws and restrictions of liberty and the rights of the people. The lawmakers who formulated and championed this legislation exhibited the usual and conventional errors and prejudices regarding the radical schools of thought. Learned Congressmen repeated malicious gossip and slander about Socialists and anarchists—that they "preached terror and incited to violence." London fought these reactionary laws at the same time that he chastised the ignorant or malicious maligners of advanced social philosophy. Speaking on the Espionage bill, which contained a section aimed especially against Socialist and anarchist publications, London said:

> The gentleman from Vermont culled from the text of a long article from some publication, the character of which I do not know, the phrase "International Revolutionary Socialism," and he thought that expression was so horrid, was so suggestive of revolution, of an immediate change by violence, that he welcomed the adoption of this section with the expression "anarchistic" in it because it promised to exclude from the mails anything dealing with International Revolutionary Socialism. His intention is good but he is ignorant on the subject. I am a believer in International Revolutionary Socialism. I believe that we are in the midst of a revolution and that the revolution began long ago with the organization of the first fighting unit on the economic and political fields with the spread of intelligence among the working people. The world revolution does not mean violence.

And then he went on to give an apt illustration from American history of the distinction between theory and methods of a social movement.

> Gentlemen, let me call your attention to the fundamental fact I tried to make clear yesterday. There is a world of distinction between the philosophy of a thing and the method. The Ku Klux Klan were terrorists, they used violence, but they were not Socialists, they were not anarchists. They had no distinct philosophy for the reorganization of the world. They were just the Ku Klux Klan, and they used terrorism to promote the things they believed in. The night-rider fighting the tobacco trust was a terrorist; he was not an anarchist. He was a violator of the law; he resorted to violence. The industrial corporation, whether in the state of Washington or Colorado, that hires gunmen to use against strikers is a terrorist. Please draw the distinction between method and philosophy. So far as the Socialists are concerned they have always and everywhere sought to promote their cause by peaceful methods. Even the Social Democrats of Russia, having to deal with the most autocratic government in the world, pinned their faith upon education and the growth of a greater knowledge among the people.

London's way of approaching a problem was novel, at least to Congress. The House never knew what to expect when he rose to speak, therefore a five- or ten-minute speech of his rarely ran a smooth course. There were always interruptions, objections, wrangling. Nevertheless he usually succeeded in getting across the points he had in mind. The majority of the House, whether they agreed with him or not, found it worth their while to hear him out. He managed to arouse their interest. Frequently his bitterest opponents would become involved in a running argument with him and would attempt to force him to the wall, to make him admit some "dangerous" Socialist doctrine or some unorthodox view on American history. London always welcomed such duels and he frequently routed opponents with his keen satire, superior knowledge and fine reasoning.

On September 10, 1917, London obtained the floor in the discussion of the soldiers' and sailors' life insurance bill. He pointed out the good and the weak features of the proposal. Then he expounded the socialist view of insurance in general—that it should be extended to all workers in all industries and should be managed by the government. When his time expired he asked for ten or fifteen minutes more "to give the reasons for my belief." To this request came a generous response. "We will give the gentleman all the time he wants." The House was always genuinely interested in what London had to say.

But instead of proceeding on the question of insurance London took up the peace terms that had just then been offered by the German Reichstag. The champions of the administration immediately jumped to their feet with all sorts of objections and motions to shut off London's remarks. One Congressman declared "I make the point to protect the public interest." The wrangling continued for a long time with the Chairman finally ruling: "The gentleman from New York will proceed." His decision was greeted with applause.

A few weeks later London was drawn into a discussion on the old question of states' rights. He had been talking on woman suffrage and casually made a statement that startled a representative from the south, who stopped him to ask, "Does the gentleman believe that war blots out the states?" Thereupon followed this colloquy:

> London—I think that the states have been blotted out long ago. A million men died on the battlefield to destroy artificial state lines. There is an American people, one people, one and indivisible, and the states are mere geographical conveniences. If they are not conveniences they are nothing else.
>
> Mr. Hardy—Is not the gentleman carried away by his enthusiasm when he says that state lines are all blotted out?
>
> London—I manage to combine enthusiasm with good sense.
>
> Speaker—The time of the gentleman from New York has expired.

Mr. Hardy—Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman be given one minute in which to answer seriously the question whether he believes that the states should be wiped out.

The time was granted and London proceeded.

Nothing is more absurd than the claim of states' rights to-day, by a party [the Democrats] which has federalized the state militia and so has done away with the last refuge of the states. The state militia was supposed to be an army organized by the state and existing for the purpose of protecting the state against the encroachment of the Federal Government. Now they have federalized the state militia. They talk about national insurance, about national road permissions and national road appropriations, but when it comes to the rights of the human being, to the right of individuals, then they raise the question of states' rights. Many of them will vote for national prohibition or in favor of submitting an amendment which will allow the farmers of Texas to vote on the question of prohibiting the man in New York from drinking a glass of beer. They would allow people in one end of this country to regulate the personal habits of people at the other end of the country. They see no objection to that. But when it comes to a question involving an extension of human liberty they raise the cry of states' rights. I think it is untenable.

CHAPTER XIX

The "Lone Socialist Vote"

By the time the President and his advisers had decided to declare war against Austria-Hungary and thus make their partnership with the Allies complete, the original opposition in the House had dwindled to one vote, that of Meyer London. He was alone in speaking against such a declaration of war and in voting against it. He based his position upon two arguments: the first, a general opposition to all war under all circumstances; the second, the fact that nothing was being done, either by the United States or by the Allies, to advance the high purposes to which President Wilson had pledged this country when he led it into the conflict.

Explaining his general opposition to all war London said:

> As a Socialist I am pledged to vote against the declaration of war. In matters of war I am a teetotaler. I refuse to take the first intoxicating drink. The Socialists of the world in all parliaments have opposed war until the last moment. Had there been a majority of Socialists in the countries of Europe in 1914 there would have been no war. If there were a majority of Socialists in the parliaments of the contending nations today, the war would be over tomorrow. It is my obligation to give expression to that sentiment, to represent that body of thought and that international code of ethics by voting against a declaration of war, against spreading of the horror of it.

He entered upon the other arguments which he had expressed on several earlier occasions. Why did not the Allies accept the peace formula of the Russian revolutionary government? The Russian peace terms were identical with those proposed by

President Wilson, but because the slogans came from the Socialists of Russia, "the reactionaries throughout the world began to denounce it as a German machination, as if you have to bribe people into loving peace, as if you have to corrupt people to seek normal conditions, as if you have to poison the mind of the world in order that it should crave the restoration of the normal life of the world."

The war was not being fought for the beautiful ideals enunciated by the President. The statesmen of the Allied countries said so almost frankly and even in this country there was a wide gulf between the sentiments of internationalism and of helping the weak and oppressed people on the one side and practical acts on the other side.

> People who only nine months ago voted to restrict immigration, to prohibit the admission to the United States of various populations including those of the smaller nations now under the heels of invaders, now are asked to fight for these same people. Ten months ago they voted to prevent them from getting access to this country, today they are asked to carry on war for their redemption. It is difficult to digest, it is hard for the average man to assimilate, it can only be understood by one who can reason and dream and feel and hope in terms of the world, in terms of the universe, in terms of humanity, in terms of the human family—the one and indivisible family. It is only then that we can honestly appeal to world internationalism. It is only then that we can honestly appeal to the world to do away with oppression, monarchism, autocracy, whether that autocrat be a crowned king, or an uncrowned king by virtue of possessing the oil lands, the coal lands and the natural resources of an otherwise free people. This is Socialism. This is social democracy. This is the internationalism which some fools denounce as anarchism, as tending to disrupt society.

As was expected a flood of denunciation descended upon London's head when he had finished. One Congressman advised him to leave the House and go to join the Russian Bolsheviki. The press was equally indignant. In their reports the next day

many newspapers compared London's action in voting against the war measure with that of Senator LaFollette, who was absent in his office when the vote was taken and thus made it possible for the Senate to record a unanimous vote. Later, LaFollette explained that he had intended to offer an amendment to the war measure and if that amendment were rejected he would have voted against the bill. London did not leave his post for a moment. He not only voted his principles but defended them in a militant speech that he knew would serve as a target for assault both in the House and in the press.

Recalling the episode in later years, Marx Lewis, London's secretary, added a few details of his own observation. "Never did London feel the isolation to which he was condemned by his attitude more than when he cast the only dissenting vote against war with Austria-Hungary. He spoke for a few minutes, telling the House that in matters of war he was a teetotaler. His speech brought down a dozen denunciatory speeches, each more violent than the one before. He then asked that he be given five minutes to reply to the attacks which had lasted more than an hour. But it was refused, and the attacks continued. . . He returned to the office worn down by the arduous struggle of which this was a climax. It seemed as if the fight was getting the better of him physically. His face was drawn, his hair had become a little whiter, his figure a little slimmer, but in his eyes there still blazed the fire that to thousands of people all over the nation meant that he was a fighter. They could break him physically, but spiritually he remained undaunted."

Some comfort London must have found in the flood of congratulations which the mails brought him from men and women all over the land.

CHAPTER XX

London's Second Peace Plan

When Congress opened its new session in the first week of December, 1917, London introduced a resolution providing that "Congress shall initiate the organization of an international league to secure a durable peace and shall call for the purpose a conference of representatives of the parliaments of all countries now at war with the Central Powers." This resolution was in line with the endeavor of the Socialists of several war countries, the Labor Party of Great Britain, the Bolsheviki of Russia and the Social Democrats of Germany, to get the nations to commit themselves as to the terms on which they would be willing to consider peace. In his own way President Wilson was working towards somewhat the same end. In his messages to Congress he announced the principles upon which he had asked America to enter the war. In his last message, delivered at about the time that London introduced this resolution, Wilson outlined his idea of what the peace terms should be, in Fourteen Points, most of which coincided with the terms that had been enunciated by the Socialists of Russia and by the Labor Party of Great Britain. But all these efforts bore no fruit. The diplomats of the Allies refused to give their sanction. They were loyal to their secret treaties, in which they had pledged themselves to help each other to obtain territory and indemnities and colonies—to make it a peace of victory and conquest and spoils rather than a peace of justice.

The shrewd diplomats of France and England succeeded in their clever game of hoodwinking Wilson and the American people. They applauded his beautiful phrases and expressions of

idealism at the very moment that they were disregarding his practical recommendations for realizing these ideals. What they really thought of Wilson's peace terms these diplomats betrayed in their attacks upon the Socialists of their own countries, who formulated and urged similar terms. The Socialists were denounced as pro-German, as agents of the Kaiser, as traitors, although they stood for the same kind of peace that Wilson was promising the American people.

At that time, few people saw through the game that the European diplomats were playing. For the purposes of war morale and propaganda the Allied governments had to be praised and their motives never questioned. The press did its part and hailed every utterance of an Allied statesman as inspired wisdom. The masses were mystified, the intellectuals confused.

In one of the longest and most thoroughgoing speeches that London delivered in the House he sought to raise the curtain and show what actually was going on behind the scenes. He asked the floor on January 11, 1918, to discuss the resolution he had introduced the previous month. Much of what he said in this speech was not to the liking of the reactionaries of the House. He was heckled and taunted. One of the representatives even regretted that London had been given unlimited time by unanimous consent. But these were the exceptions. The majority listened attentively and asked an occasional question for enlightenment and explanation. London was that day telling them truths that had been suppressed or disguised—good, substantial, political wisdom. He was giving them light to see a way out of the vale of tears and blood into a future of peace and goodwill.

He began his speech with an explanation of his proposal that America initiate the organization of a League of Nations. He went into details as to its organization and functions in time of trouble between nations. He foresaw what the world is beginning to realize, now that the League has been in existence ten years, that the League alone would not eliminate the danger of war. Something else was necessary, that is, disarmament.

> As long as the nations maintain large armies and navies all treaties will be "scraps of paper." As long as it will be within the power of any government to set in motion millions of armed men against any people there will be wars and rumors of wars. For the last three years the world has been trying to regain its balance and to offset the effect of the vicious blow inflicted during the first two months of the war by a powerful military machine. One of the principal objects of international coöperation must be to do away with armaments and militarism.

The ideal League would have to include all nations; therefore its formation would have to be postponed until after a declaration of peace. For the present a Congress of the Allied nations should be called for the purpose of bringing the war to a speedy conclusion. The Congress would have to accomplish one great thing, the formulation of a peace program. And London went on to show that the peace program proposed by President Wilson had been adopted substantially from the peace program of the Russian Bolsheviki.

This favorable mention of the Bolsheviki was sure to evoke objections. One Congressman asked, "Does the gentleman mean those people who are now working for Germany and the Kaiser?" And London, though himself disappointed in what was then happening in Russia and in thorough disagreement with the activities of the Bolsheviki, replied:

> How many years did it take the United States, a little republic of three million souls, to establish a stable form of government? You had the Whiskey Rebellion, you had the Confederation struggling for years to establish a government. You had the constitutional convention composed of the best minds of America who many times gave up all hope of framing a constitution. And after all, the framers of the Constitution had to compromise with slavery, knowing well that some day it would lead to civil war. You cannot take 180,000,000 people and organize them in a day. It is only the selfish and the unthinking who would condemn 180,000,000 people who have struggled for centuries and have finally

overthrown an autocratic form of government. The rest of the world sympathizes with this long-suffering people.

Had the Allies made a definite declaration five or six months ago Russia would have been saved to them today. And even now Russia, exhausted, bleeding at every pore, starving, repudiates a selfish peace and pleads for the peace of the world.

And London concluded his speech with a plea for civilized relations between nations, for truth and candor in diplomacy.

All I want is to urge the necessity of taking up for discussion the basic principles upon which a permanent peace can be established for the world and by the world. I am an opponent of anarchy. I hate disorder. I detest, with every fiber of my being, the abuse of physical force and the strong taking advantage of the weak. I detest it in industry when it takes little children and exploits their helplessness for profit. I detest oppression. I am for order. I stand for order and for peaceful methods.

I love America not because it has yet developed the best that can be given to mankind but because of the opportunities it affords to fight for better things, and so long as that opportunity exists we will have better things. Democracy does not guarantee to be wise. Democracy does not guarantee to be always just. But it is always wiser and always more just than the little groups who "speak in the name of the people."

I stand for order in the relation of each man to his nation and of each citizen to the government to which he owes loyalty and of each nation to the rest of the world. That is why I advocate the necessity of international order instead of international chaos, international destruction and international anarchy.

CHAPTER XXI

Many Measures

London stood alone, a solitary sentinel of sanity and justice in war time. He was probably the busiest and hardest worker in the House during the war session. From all over the country people brought their troubles to him. Some wrote for relief, some to unburden their minds. His own party called upon him to fight its battles in the Department of Justice, in the Department of State and more often in the Post Office Department, for the country had gone far in oppression and persecution. Socialist and radical publications were thrown out of the mails and denied second class mailing privileges. Socialist gatherings were broken up. Socialist headquarters were raided and destroyed.

The problems discussed by Congress required study and careful preparation. London would never consent simply to record his agreement or disagreement with a bill before the House. He always had his own reasons, Socialist reasons, for voting as he did. He had to present his reasons and defend them thoroughly, if only as a matter of record. He held firmly to the rule he set himself after the war had been declared not to act as an obstructionist. He used his position to help steer the ship in the direction he considered the best and safest for the people of the country and humanity at large. And while doing all this he did not allow to go unanswered the many insinuations and slurs he suffered from the super-patriots and radical-baiters. He was always on the spot with a ready reply that often turned the tables and exposed his assailant to the ridicule of his colleagues.

So we find him scolding Congress for defeating the social insurance bill for which he had labored so many months:

I have been too angry during the last few days to attempt to talk or listen. The House showed last Wednesday, when it refused to consider the bill dealing with unemployment insurance, its utter incompetence to deal with this problem. Ignorance and darkness were distributed equally between the two sides. There were just as many reactionaries, standpatters and unthinking men on the Republican side as on the Democratic side. So honors are even between both of you.

When I talked to you about the necessity of studying unemployment insurance now I was met with the argument that we were at war and therefore could not get the proper information. Now the information has come to you—nay, you have it. The order is here—an order which will deprive millions of men of their employment for 15 days. Millions of them with nothing to spare, who cannot be called upon to make such a sacrifice. Millions of them who can hardly stand the high cost of living.

When I urged upon you the resolution providing for the study of the problem of unemployment many of you did not dare to vote for it because it had been introduced by a Socialist. Forty-seven treacherous Democrats, too cowardly to vote for a Socialist measure when it had a chance to pass, who voted for it last year, refused to vote for it this year—the most contemptible political performance that any party could be guilty of. I just studied those forty-seven names and I will memorize them and I will remember them. I feel like throwing up my job in Congress and going to the districts of these forty-seven men and showing them up.

Shortly after that he spoke twice on the outrage committed against a recent Socialist state convention in South Dakota. The convention had been broken up by the police upon instructions from the mayor of the town. The secretary of the Socialist state organization was seized, forced into an automobile and deported from the city.

After citing the facts of the case London remonstrated as follows:

For the present I will only say that now when the whole world is watching the work of the German Social Democracy, when the hope of every mother in America is that the

> spirit of rebellion and love of democracy and love of peace among the German Socialists will save the American boys from the trenches, when the hope of the whole world is that the revolutionary movement will wind up the war abroad and force universal peace and compel tyrant and oppressor, plutocrat and financier, imperialist and traitor against the welfare of the people, to restore the world to a normal state—it is a dastardly act, it is the act of scoundrels, to break up Socialist conventions. It can do no good to America. It can do no good to the cause in which this country is engaged. It will not increase the respect for democracy in the United States. This Congress should take action. Somebody should take action to condemn actions of this sort.

Attacks on Socialism in the House became more frequent and more intolerant. The assailants had found an excellent target to shoot at the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. To them the Bolsheviki were practical Socialists and all the mistakes and shortcomings of the Bolshevik régime were the inevitable outcome of the Socialist doctrine. London listened to their attacks for several weeks and finally asked for a few minutes' time to answer. The short address he delivered upon that occasion would have disposed of the matter to the satisfaction of intelligent, unbiased minds. London did not attempt to justify the acts of the Bolsheviki. He sought to explain these acts in the light of history and pleaded for patience and indulgence. He had spoken along these lines on several previous occasions but never with the same vigor and passion.

> The statesman from Texas treats with contempt those poor unfortunate men in Russia who have gone through centuries of oppression and through pain and martyrdom, who have been led by an unspeakable tyrant into a war not of their making. Those poor men are trying to build a republic, build a free nation for 180,000,000 people, and you treat them with contempt, you flout them you ridicule them. Is that American? Have not all statesmen, all Republican and Democratic Presidents, the right to make mistakes? Then give the same right to the representatives of that poor people. In the year 1066 a band of pirates seized England

and divided the land among their pals and that division is the basis of England's economic, juridical, and political institutions to-day. The great-great-grandchildren of those pirates are the aristocracy of the land now.

If it was right in 1066 to lay the foundation of land ownership and of law and of political and economic institutions of one country, why is it wrong for 180,000,000 men who till the soil and labor to try to establish an economic system which will secure to every one of them access to the soil and the right to live the life of free men?

Just recall the long struggle of this little Republic to establish a government. Do you realize what those people had to live through? Is it fair to talk of Russia's experiment to-day as a Socialist experiment? Can you make an experiment in Socialism under the conditions which surround Russia? Can you improve a ship when it is struggling not to be wrecked? That is Russia's condition to-day. The land is in agony. Everything there is abnormal. War and revolution combined. How terrible it is! We all hope that Russia will not rest until every feudal landowner is driven not only from the soil of Russia but from the soil of Europe forever. We all hope that, and that is one of the aspirations of the Socialist movement. No matter what happens we must treat Russia with loving tenderness.

Please do not talk of the Socialist movement as if you knew something about it. The gentleman from Texas is a very brilliant man and I am very sorry to see his brilliancy going to waste in the choking atmosphere of the cloakroom. He has not been much on the floor. When he talks to me about Socialists refusing to work, he is wrong. It is true that I would not work with mules. My work is against mules. I have tried to do my duty as I see it, inviting the attacks of the uninformed, of the prejudiced and of the vulgar.

Although only five hours from New York I have not been home very often. I am always here, studying men, studying legislation, watching and observing, striving to know more so as to be more useful. I am doing my duty as well as any other member of Congress and I am working as hard as any member of Congress ever did. I refuse to accept either the wisdom or the methods of the gentleman from Texas.

In the course of the following few weeks London spoke on the railway bill, demanding that no provision be made for restoring railways to their private owners after the end of the war. He argued in favor of permanent government ownership of railways, laying special emphasis on the unfair treatment the railway companies accorded their employees. Then followed a renewed fight on the social insurance project.

In connection with a bill for raising salaries of postal employees, London made a plea for a minimum wage for all government employees. In a debate on the plan for dwellings that the government was building for the war workers who were crowding Washington, London argued in favor of retaining the buildings after the war and thus providing for a probable emergency in the case of the inevitable housing shortage. London's warning was not heeded and the housing shortage occurred as he had predicted—to the distress of the tenants and the joy of the landlords.

When the question of fixing a minimum price for wheat came up London surprised the House by speaking against it. This speech was an able correction of a mistaken impression of Socialism.

> The claim is made that these measures are Socialistic. They are nothing of the kind. The trouble with legislation of this kind is that it is the Socialism of the fool. You cannot take from one class and give to another. You cannot take off a burden from one group and impose it upon the rest of the community. To do so is certainly not Socialistic. You cannot fix a minimum price for a product so essential as wheat and refuse to fix prices for other necessaries without doing an injustice to the great masses of the people. You must do one of two things. You must either permit the national government to regulate the prices of all articles essential to sustain life or abandon the attempt to control the price of one article only. You cannot attempt to fix arbitrarily the price of one commodity and leave everything else to chance. Every effort to fix prices arbitrarily upon a few articles only has failed throughout the world.

When the old Russian government tried to fix the price of grain the peasants refused to sell, preferring to lose it altogether rather than to sell at what they thought a low price as compared with the prevailing prices of the things they had to buy.

When you talk about the evil of profiteering you amuse me. Society today is based on profiteering. It is all profiteering. Business is organized for profit. You want a business man, a man who has something to sell, to be inspired not by profit but by the common weal. You want him to acquire the collective soul. He has none. He has not been trained to develop one. You have been telling him to go out into the world and get the better of the world if he can. Competition is your highest law, individual against individual, group against group, class against class, all against everybody, everybody against all.

To stop competition in one article and leave it unchecked in everything else is poor wisdom indeed. . . . What you are trying to do is just to bribe a small group of society at the expense of the rest of the community by offering a specially attractive price.

The government should be the exclusive purchaser of every article and product of the farm. The government should have the power to determine what is a reasonable price. There is no other solution for the farm problem. The people for once must learn to act collectively, as a unit, as a people, not as an aggregation of petty, self-seeking, greedy individuals trying to devour the rest of the community. If this war will not teach us elementary principles of ethics and economics, of coöperation, what will?

CHAPTER XXII

May Day in Congress

Many were the slings and arrows hurled on the floor of the House at the Socialists of America and of the enemy countries in Europe. Every time London opposed a war measure or balked at a reactionary or militaristic piece of legislation somebody in the House reminded him of the St. Louis Resolution or of the "betrayal" of the German Socialists in supporting "the Kaiser's war." The Congressmen who made a specialty of baiting the Socialists came to realize that London was in a predicament. The Socialists everywhere were separating into majority and minority groups; new leaders were coming to the fore and old leaders were being repudiated. Some of the positions taken by the Socialists here and abroad proved erroneous and were being abandoned. London knew all that and also that he alone represented the movement that was divided on the terrible problem of the war. To defend himself and his party and his comrades abroad was a dreadful ordeal. It simply could not be done in a brief answer to calculated questions, or in a short retort to venomous remarks. He waited for his opportunity to expound his position fully and he finally got it.

On May 1, 1918, a most fitting day for a Socialist speech, London secured permission to address the House on International Socialism and the Interallied war aims. He took for his theme a cabled report that the Socialists of the Austro-Hungarian empire had been preparing to demonstrate on May 1st in favor of universal peace. Here were Socialists in an enemy country rising against their government and clamoring for peace. What was the meaning of it? How did it conform with the general belief that the Socialists in the enemy countries were pro-govern-

ment and pro-war? In order to answer this question London went into an analysis of the Socialist attitude to the war from the day it started.

> When the war broke out the Socialists were staggered. They were nowhere numerically strong enough to prevent it. The duty of the French and Belgian Socialists was clear. Their countries had been invaded, the existence of their people was jeopardized, and they rushed to the defense of their country as brave men were expected to do. In defending France the French Socialists defended not only their own country but the cradle of civilization in Europe. There was no dissension among the French Socialists, no difference of opinion. By all the precepts of the highest patriotism and of International Socialism they were bound to give unstinted aid to protect France. In Germany, in which the government had been preparing for years for the contingency of a European war and where the ruling class, guided solely by strategic military consideration, selected the most favorable moment for the conflict, the Socialists found themselves in an impossible position. In twenty-four hours the government could have crushed every Socialist organization in the country. But that was not all. While Republican France and innocent little Belgium were to the west of them, what was then considered the powerful military force, Russia, threatened Germany from the east. The war was on. The question that presented itself to the Socialists was whether they should vote for the military budget. The individual Socialists were already in the ranks, a part of the military machine. The Socialist parliamentary group, consisting of 111 out of 397, was divided on the question of voting the war credits. By a caucus rule it decided to vote for the war budget.
>
> The chairman of the Socialist executive committee, Hugo Haase, was in the minority in the caucus. Since then the best intellectual forces of the German Social Democracy have refused to vote military credits, and have fearlessly denounced the imperialistic policy of their government. What was in the beginning of the war a minority seems to represent now a formidable power in the Socialist movement of Germany. It was Haase who mercilessly flayed the government

for the so-called Russian peace and who exposed the annexationist designs of the German government.

The Socialists of the world who for more than fifty years advocated international coöperation were compelled by the very force of events to defend their respective countries. They have not, however, abandoned the desire to tie together the severed bonds of internationalism. The average conception of patriotism is that a man must always insist that his country is right, and as the Austrian Socialist leader, Dr. Victor Adler, said on the floor of the Reichsrat, "It seems to be considered a patriotic duty to lie for the fatherland."

It was difficult task that devolved upon the Socialists. No one can afford to weaken his country when its very existence may depend upon the success or defeat of its arms. To oppose the country entering a war is one thing; to oppose the country after it has been put in danger by entering the war is a responsibility that no one can honestly assume.

The Socialists of Germany were caught in a net of falsehood and misrepresentation from which they could not extricate themselves. Some of the braver and more courageous attempted to break through, but their strength was not sufficient. At last the Russian revolution occurred, and a clarion call to peace was issued by the revolutionary government to all nations. This gave the Socialists of Germany and of all the warring countries the opportunity to rectify their position and again to find their socialistic bearings. For that purpose it was planned in June, 1917, to call an international conference of the Socialists of all countries to ratify the peace terms of the Russian revolutionary government—the very terms that had been practically adopted by President Wilson. But the conference had been prevented by the fact that first the United States and then the Allies refused passports to the delegates. If the German Socialists had failed to join hands with their comrades of the Allied countries for a joint peace the Allied governments were the deliberate cause of it.

But the Allied Socialists did convene later in London and did

make their position clear as to their war aims. London now launched upon a plea for a peace drive along the lines prepared by the Allied Socialists.

> On a previous occasion I obtained leave to incorporate in the Record the Memorandum on War Aims agreed upon at the Interallied Socialist Congress. I consider the document one of the most valuable in the history of the war. The worker, the man on the lowest rung of the social ladder, he upon whom press all the burdens of society, has asserted himself, and has voiced his wishes and his claims as an international force.
>
> I am particularly interested in giving this document the greatest publicity, as it is my hope that the Socialist movement of the United States will unanimously endorse and stand by the decision of the Interallied Socialist Congress. As Socialists, whatever our opinion might have been about the entry of the United States into the war, we certainly cannot afford to see the United States worsted in the contest. . . . Whatever the designs or the dreams of the capitalist imperialists may be the President of the United States has left no doubt that the American people, and he as their spokesman, have no selfish designs. The President has not only adopted the substance of the International Socialist program but even the very formulas of the International Socialist movement for the expression of the aims and the objects of the United States in this war. The Socialists in the United States cannot be indifferent or neutral. There is surely no Socialist here who would like to see the United States defeated. In the absence of selfish national designs by the United States the participation of the United States in the world contest will insure the presence of an element of moderation at the International Peace Conference.

This view of the war and this (alas, ill founded!) hope had been held by London all along. But it was not shared by all his comrades in the Socialist Party. It is true that no Socialist wished for the defeat of the United States or of the Allies, but very many Socialists as well as the party officially refused to credit the claim of idealism enunciated by Wilson, and therefore refused to lend moral aid and comfort to the government. Gen-

erally the position was that war is a greater evil than any evil it has aimed to cure. Chief among the defenders of this position was the venerable leader of the American Socialists, Eugene V. Debs. He took the same attitude towards the war now as London had taken before the war was declared. London, in his speech against the declaration of war, defined war as murder and reminded his colleagues of the Biblical command not to kill. Debs refused ever to recede from this moral position. He could find no justification, no extenuation, for the wholesale murder of humanity. All governments that sent their young men to the slaughter were parties to the crime. Generally speaking, it is fair to say that Debs reflected the sentiments of the organized Socialist movement.

London closed his address with a second plea for the peace terms of the Interallied Socialist Conference.

> The declaration of the Interallied Socialist Conference rises to the noblest heights of Socialist ethics. It is free from malice and hatred. There is no jingoism about it. The philosophy of the International Socialist movement, which has been striving for more than half a century to curb imperialism, to eliminate national antipathies, to do away with clandestine diplomacy and secret treaties, to remove force as a means of settling national differences and to bring order into the relations of people, finds there its noblest expression. The work of the conference was inspired not by the desire to restore the old but to build the new. The war aims of Interallied Labor laid special stress on the need of establishing a League of Nations for the defense of international rights. They would do away with professional armies; they emphatically oppose all projects for an economic war after peace has been secured. They propose a comprehensive, constructive program of the solution of the problems which will arise with peace. They would provide for the restoration of the devasted areas and for the reparation of wrongdoing, not only by reimbursement for the material property proved to be destroyed and damaged, but by setting up the wage earners and peasants themselves in homes and employment.

CHAPTER XXIII

Socialist Propaganda in the House

The practice of London's opponents in the House of flinging irrelevant questions at him with the intention of confusing him, of throwing him off the track, seldom achieved that purpose, thanks to his wide knowledge of history and of economic, political and social facts. Thanks also to his extraordinary skill at repartee, he usually managed to gain the upper hand in such encounters. But it must be added that he never tried to escape by quibbling or dodging. His answers were straightforward and frank. He won by sheer weight of knowledge and argument.

One day he took the floor to register his denunciation of a proposed bill to make criticism of government or law in time of war a felony. He made his protest as emphatic as possible.

> It is one of the most mischievous pieces of legislation ever imposed upon a free people. There is nothing to parallel it. I have carefully examined the history of European countries during the last century and found nothing to compare with it. There is nothing so drastic to be found during the restoration of the Bourbons in France or during the period which followed the triumph of the Prussian government after the suppression of the revolution of 1848.

At this point one of the hecklers broke in with a question about the I. W. W. The question had no possible connection with the argument that London was making. It was just a firecracker thrown under London's chair to bedevil him. But London was not to be frightened. He said:

> I cannot stop to discuss the I. W. W. The official report of

> the President's mediation commission declares that the I. W. W. had exerted its strongest hold in those industries where employers have most resisted the trade union movement and where some form of protest against unjust treatment was inevitable.

Thus disposing of the first interruption he continued with his argument against the bill:

> The vice of this bill is that it blindly follows the old Sedition Law of 1798. I have carefully examined that law and a number of works describing that period of American history, when everything was in a state of ferment and the young democracy had not yet learned what democracy meant, when every public official beginning with a member of Congress and ending with the President was victimized by unscrupulous and brutal calumny and vilification. A law was then passed to protect the personnel of the government. It was to protect the members of Congress and the President from being unjustly accused of all sorts of infamous crimes. The accusing of members of the government was a common practice in that day.

Then up rose another heckler with the question, "While we are in this period of stress it ought to seem good to everybody to keep within certain limits, and they ought not to undertake such changes as would embarrass the country in its hour of need."

This unexpected remark London met with an impromptu statement of the radical position on the right of criticism in time of national crises. London developed the theory that it is of supreme importance for the welfare of the people to give freest reign to popular criticism in just such abnormal times. For it is only in times of national stress, when the mind of the nation is exercised to its fullest capacity, that the nation does its hardest thinking and produces the most valuable criticism.

> The theory prevails that in war time we are not to criticize our institutions. The contrary is true. War calls forth all the energies of a nation. It is not only guns or soldiers but

all the spiritual and intellectual and economic forces of a nation that are called into action. When we are put to the test we discover everything that is wrong with us. When a nation is called upon to exercise all its energy, then all the weakest spots in its economic, social and political institutions come to the surface.

Take as an illustration the fact that 29 per cent of the young men of this country when called into military service have been found to be physically defective. We have discovered that there is an alarming condition of illiteracy in some parts of the country. Now, of course, some students of those subjects knew that before. . . . We all protested in ordinary times against profiteering, but we never realized what a curse it was, we never realized it to the extent we realize it now. And every economic institution of the country is closely connected with its political institutions. Therefore to say to the people that just at the very hour when we discover the defects, you are not to suggest any changes or make any criticisms, is poor advice indeed. We do not hesitate to change war implements proven to be inadequate. We should not hesitate, we should not flinch, from making such changes in the economics and politics of the country as the needs of our times demand.

There were exceptions to the general rule. It did happen now and then that a protest on London's part against an abuse of justice or freedom met not with disfavor but with approval. One of these incidents occurred in June, 1918, when London informed Congress of the ridiculous order issued by the Governor of Iowa, which prohibited the inhabitants of the state from the use of any language but English in public gatherings, in church, while talking on the telephone or while riding in public conveyances. London put the facts before the House, and added:

Now it is evident that some public officials suffer from that peculiar form of insanity that comes with war. To prohibit a man from using a language which he knows and the only language with which he can express his thoughts is to seal his lips and deprive him of the right to speak. To prevent a person from worshiping God in any language except the official language is to destroy a fundamental right, an ele-

mentary right which lies at the very basis of this republic.

Where do these men get their authority? Where do they get their law? Where in all history has any free country issued a similar ukase? The protest to me is sent by a group of Czechoslovaks, or Bohemians. We know that the Bohemians have sent a regiment from this country to the front in France. They are the bravest fighters that the Allies have. They are fighting not only for the United States but they are intensely interested in the problems confronting the small nationalities in Austria-Hungary. To them the war is a holy war, a war of emancipation of their own people, and these men are prohibited by the silly order of an unthinking official from using the only language in which they can appeal to one another.

No defense for the Governor was offered. On the other hand a few Congressmen suggested ways of preventing the execution of the ukase. London then pointed out the interesting fact that the Governor's act was the result of one of the many "patriotic" movements then flourishing in the country. And while on the subject he discussed the slogan of "one country, one language" which is so dear to the hearts of jingoes the world over.

But the mistake that these well-intentioned men make is that you cannot appeal to people except in a language they do understand, that the only way of Americanizing one born in a foreign country is to teach him in his own language the value of American institutions. You cannot teach him in the language that he does not understand. You cannot adopt in the interest of uniformity of language the foolish policy that has been destructive of public order in Austria-Hungary.

There is a fundamental difference between assimilation in the United States and assimilation in other countries where it is the result of physical coercion. In Austria-Hungary, the Hungarians have been trying for years to suppress the various Slav languages. In the German portion of Austria-Hungary they have been trying to suppress every language other than German, with the result that they have aroused a profound sense of national pride in all the smaller nationalities. There is nothing that will so stimulate the love of

one's own distinctive language as persecution. Where you will accomplish things with love you will produce the very opposite effect by coercion and oppression. There are well-meaning men who would like to see every one speak the same language, but it cannot be accomplished by mere edicts. It must be the result of a process of education, of bringing up the people to learn to love the institutions of the country. It cannot be done by duress.

CHAPTER XXIV

Labor Problems in Congress

Labor problems presented themselves to Congress, despite the general desire to ignore them and despite the general cry that all available time was needed for dealing with war measures. There was a child labor law which Congress had passed and which the Supreme Court had declared unconstitutional; there was the question of a minimum wage for women, and above all there was the problem of making timely provision for the army of unemployed that the end of the war was sure to create. London considered these problems of first importance and made them the subject of several speeches on the floor.

His speech on the verdict of the Supreme Court destroying the child labor law was a scathing indictment of conservative legal and judicial minds and a warning against the despotic powers the Supreme Court had usurped for itself. The warning sounded by London was on grounds more modern and more scientific than similar warnings of leading personalities in American history. He pointed to the danger that

> It will be impossible for Congress to cure by legislation any of the social or industrial evils which legislation in all countries of the civilized world try to meet.

The significance of this can be rightly estimated only by those who, like London, had been steeped in economic and industrial struggles.

> It will throw back into the industrial field all the groups that are contending for the right to exist, all the economic classes among whom there is a ceaseless clash of interest.

> Instead of the national will exerting itself through the act of the national supreme body of legislature, all the industrial clashes will have to find expression in the industrial field solely with all the bitterness, with all the cruelties, with all the horrors that industrial strife involves and with all the disturbance to society.

Defeated in the effort to pass a social insurance bill as a straightforward social reform, London endeavored to smuggle the idea through as a war measure. When Congress took up the question of the rehabilitation of returning soldiers, London saw his opportunity. The bill, as reported by the committee, concerned itself almost exclusively with the wounded and the crippled, recommending methods of taking care of them. London then asserted that this was only a small part of the problem, for far larger than the number of returned invalids and disabled would be the number of unemployed, thrown out of work by the demobilization of the army and the reconstruction of the industries from a war to a peace basis. He demanded that Congress begin at once to make provision for the industrially crippled and disabled as it was trying to do for the physically crippled and disabled.

> European countries have recognized the necessity of preparing for the after-war period during the war. They have realized the necessity of taking up the question, assembling all the information that can possibly be had, and of benefiting by every experience the nation is undergoing today. It stands to reason that millions of men now in the army, millions of men and women now employed in the munitions industry will find themselves out of employment at the close of the war, that it will be an impossible task in the absence of any accumulated data or any information gathered during the war, for the nation to adapt itself to the task it will then face. It should be the province of statesmen to grapple with these questions, to look into the future and to prepare now for the inevitable.

London's inclination to base his arguments on fundamental principles, moral and scientific, make many of his speeches read

like lessons in economics, ethics or social science. A striking illustration of this was his speech on a minimum wage for women. This proposed law served him as a text for discussing both the moral and economic aspect of wages. As to the moral side of the question he said:

> What does a minimum wage mean? It means that no matter how humble an industry or occupation may be, whether it be that of the street cleaner requiring no skill whatever, or that of the astronomer, one thing is certain, and that is that the human being should get sufficient compensation for his services to be able to live as a human being. He must have food, he must have clothing, he must have rent, he must have an opportunity for education. These four elements must be supplied to the human being in any civilized community. Unless the wage paid the worker is sufficient to secure for him these four elements which go into the making of life of a civilized human being, he cannot live a man's life. The larger the number of men and women who work below such a minimum wage the less stable is society.

And if that be so, a minimum wage should be established not merely for one group of workers but for all.

> We are just beginning to wake up. The English workers demand a minimum wage on a national scale. In other words they demand that the industrial society should be governed by the moral law, and all legislation, which is, after all, all economic legislation, should be ruled by moral law.

But what about the old scientific law of "supply and demand"? Aren't we fettered by it? Aren't we helpless under its sway?

> Consider the stupidity of some text-book writers who would apply the law of supply and demand to the relation of employer and employee. That is a survival of a doctrine that should find no place in modern society. Apply the doctrine of supply and demand to the relations of human beings and see what an absurdity you will come to. See what a state of cruelty you will reach. What will it mean to apply the

so-called law of supply and demand to the returning soldiers, to millions of men coming back from the battlefield? Political economists will say to them, "The law of supply and demand is working now. There are only five hundred jobs and there are a million of you, and you are invited to work for nothing." These pseudo-scientists would continue forever to govern the relation between human beings as the relation between capital and labor are governed now. Capital and labor are but abstractions. It is the relation between man and man that should interest us. When you speak of human society, you speak of the relation of man to man. The relation between man and man cannot be permitted to be governed by a law which is supposed to control the price of potatoes.

The law must recognize moral values as well as scientific principles:

I think that the law should express the awakening conscience of mankind, should anticipate new thoughts, should lead instead of being compelled to follow. I believe that the jurist, the student of law, should make a special study of the relations between man and man, should take nothing for granted, should not worship institutions simply because they are old, should scrutinize, examine, analyze, ask questions, be ready to march forward with events as life dictates —that is the mission of the lawyer—not merely to be a servant of a particular group who happens to be strong in society, to help them crush the helpless. Unfortunately that is the function of the great majority of the lawyers who are in the service of the ruling interests. Industrial legislation is coming; all legislation must become industrial.

There is a class struggle, a continuous war of classes, and in order to mitigate the damage of this struggle, it is necessary in the interest of society at large that the government transfer to its own field some of the points of contention and settle them by law.

When we speak of classes in the United States, of course, they have not that rigidity that they have in other countries. The democratic instinct is too strong here. Democracy does not mean perfection. It means a chance to fight for improvement, and to the extent to which there is that chance, just

> to that extent is there democracy. It will do no good to deny that there are evil influences, that we are blessed with a number of trusts and with arrogant financial interests. The greater the success of the democratic element in contending against these anti-democratic influences, the more will democracy be a reality. It is in the interest of this Republic, since this contest must go on, that it be transferred as much as possible from the industrial field with its strikes and lockouts, so that it may find expression on the parliamentary field where legislators can speak for their districts and speak for the people and reach results which will serve the largest number of people in the United States. As a Socialist, instead of denying the existence of the class struggle, I seek to minimize its bitterness.

Here again London enunciated a principle that would not stand the test of rigidly interpreted Socialism. Did he mean to imply that as a Socialist he favored government interference in the struggle between capital and labor, governmental limitation of the field on which the struggle is to be carried on? Can an orthodox Socialist trust to the fairness of a capitalist government? Is it not one of the tenets of the Socialist movement that government serves the interests of the class that happens to dominate?

London's last assertion that "as a Socialist, instead of denying the existence of the class struggle, I seek to minimize its bitterness," is now adopted by a large section of Socialists in many countries as a sound statement of the class struggle theory. London had been tending in this direction since America had entered the war.

CHAPTER XXV

The Russian Revolution

The Russian Revolution did not go the way London and many other Socialists would have wished. London was out of sympathy with the Bolsheviki because they violated the principles of democracy. In an interview given out after the Bolsheviki had been in power eight months, London predicted their early downfall. He based his prediction on the "fatal mistake Lenin and Trotzky had made in depriving the intellectuals of their political rights." He disapproved of many acts of the Bolsheviki in their own country, in international relations, and toward the Socialist and Labor movements in other countries. He was at one with the Allied statesmen in disappointment at the separate peace the Bolsheviki had signed with Germany. But all this did not affect his feelings toward the Russian people. He also believed that the blundering or willful wrongs of the Allied diplomats against the Russian people were responsible for the turn of events in Russia. Thus, while he found fault with the Bolshevik régime and regretted the defection of Russia in the war, he continued his staunch defense of Russia on the floor of the House. Every time he spoke on Russia it was to plead for sympathy and help and understanding for that unfortunate country. Ludwig A. Martens, the accredited representative of the Soviets in the United States, looked upon him as a friend and turned to him for assistance and advice.

Early in March, 1918, when the Allies were considering the invasion of Russian territory in Asia, London introduced a resolution calling upon Congress "solemnly to protest against any attempt to interfere with the management by the Russians of their own affairs."

By July, London's fears had been confirmed. In April, Japan had landed marines in Vladivostok. Shortly after that began the trouble with the Czechoslovak regiments on Soviet territory, and finally, in July, English and French troops stationed at Murmansk began marching south into the interior of Russia. The unwarranted invasion of Russia by the Allies was gaining momentum.

London spoke, on July 13, on how to help Russia. Much of what he now said he had said before, but this time he organized his thoughts on Russia so as to meet the strongest attack of the opposition. He pointed out that the opposition derived its greatest comfort from the Brest-Litovsk treaty of several months before. But he proved that the treaty was an act of despair on the part of distracted Russia; and that Germany was not in the least strengthened by virtue of it, for it had earned her the animosity of every Russian.

> The Brest-Litovsk peace came after the complete economic collapse of Russia. More than twenty million men had been put into uniform by the Czar. Not more than one-fourth could be used at the front. The rest, taken away from industry and agriculture, were but adding to the disorganization of life in Russia. A month before the revolution regiments were marching barefoot in the south of Russia. On the eve of the revolution the army at the front had only 48 hours' supply of food. Petrograd was starving. With the overthrow of the Czar all discipline disappeared in the army. The soldiers knew that the government which had got them into the trenches had been overthrown. They did not see any further reason for fighting. They could not see why the German workers should not overthrow their government and end the war. It did not take long before the demand for peace became general.
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> Every man in Russia capable of looking ahead saw the disaster that would follow a separate peace. The only way to stave off a separate agreement with Germany was to make an effort to obtain a universal settlement of the war. Trotzky made an effort not to sign any peace treaty at all. But Ger-

> many insisted upon a piece of paper. Had Germany been guided by statesmen and not by a militarist band, there was her opportunity. Had she treated Russia with kindness, had she refused to take advantage of her distress, had real friendly relations been restored, the vast resources of the vast Russian Empire would be at her disposal and she could have defied the Allies forever.
>
> What inexcusable folly it is for the Allies to treat unfortunate Russia and the men who made the disastrous peace as culprits! Russians are at liberty to accuse each other of having betrayed their country. This must not be done by the Allies. . . The people wanted peace. For eleven months they were fed with promises. Their government thought it would give them a breathing spell. The enemy refused to make it a real peace.

So after all, Russia alone was not to blame for what had happened. If she had blundered in signing the peace, the Allies had blundered no less in refusing to do the one thing that would have made it possible for Russia to stay in the war. And once the question of the peace was disposed of, the duty of the Allies was clear. Russia had suffered more than any of the Allied countries. Now that she was free, she was in spirit, if not in fact, an enemy of autocratic Germany. She must be helped to recuperate, to solidify her newly gained freedom.

> We have to aid Russia. She is entitled to the sympathy of the world, if for no other reason than that she has suffered so intensely. No Russian government, unless it be that of the Czar, can be a friend of Germany. Russia is not a friend of Germany to-day. Russia would welcome aid from the Allies and particularly from the United States. Let every form of economic and financial aid be extended to her. Let us stop talking military intervention. Let us stop choosing a government for her.

And London closed his speech with a remark that he sincerely believed true at the time he uttered it: "Fortunately, Russia has a friend in the President of the United States."

CHAPTER XXVI

London's Defeat in the Election of 1918

London entered upon the campaign of 1918 for reëlection to Congress beset by enemies within his own party and by a united opposition outside. During the summer the extremists in the party carried on a vigorous battle to prevent his renomination. In a statement to the members of the party this group listed among London's "disloyalties" to Socialism, his sins of omission and commission, the following, "He ignored the St. Louis Resolution right after it was adopted. He refused to introduce bills suggested by the National Executive Committee. He neglected every opportunity of manifesting the attitude of the Socialist Party, which was a direct violation of the St. Louis Resolution. . . When London sent his famous telegram to Russia not to conclude a separate peace, a good many of us felt that he ought to be recalled from Congress. If we had no courage to recall him then, let us have courage now to reconsider his nomination."

Though the efforts of the extremists were not sufficient to prevent London's nomination, they indicated a considerable defection from his ranks at a time when the opposition parties were consolidating their forces and gathering unto themselves every element to wrest the East Side from the Socialists.

While London's party split, in spirit if not in body, the two opposition parties, the Republicans and Democrats, united in support of one candidate to be run against London. This the parties did at the urgency of the National Security League and upon the call of many newspapers all over the country. As early as December 3, 1917, the *Syracuse Herald* published an editorial

headed, "Why not a patriotic fusion?" in which was stated, "Mr. London was elected in the 12th New York District by only 340 majority over his Democratic competitor. The Republican candidate received 968 votes. If the Democratic and Republican parties fused London would have been defeated."

The National Security League, which had been mercilessly flayed by London on the floor of Congress, advised the two parties to unite on Oscar S. Strauss as the savior of the district. This recommendation was not acted upon, but by the end of July "the Executive Committee of the Republican County convention ratified an agreement with Tammany whereby both parties will unite to defeat Socialist candidates for Congress in all districts where Socialists have shown strength in other years. The principal object of this fusion is to bring about the defeat of Meyer London in the 12th and of Morris Hillquit in the 20th."

The campaign to defeat London was unique in the political history of New York. Arrayed against him was the New York press, including the more liberal journals that had given him their support in the previous campaigns, prominent leaders of Jewish life, the nationalist Jews, Zionists and Poale Zionists, the Orthodox Jews and finally the "radical Socialists." He was attacked both as a dangerous radical and as a traitor against radicalism. He was denounced as an American patriot and as un-American and pro-German. He was flayed for sacrificing his Socialism in the interest of the Jews of his district and was denounced for neglecting Jewish problems in his anxiety to live up to his international Socialist ideals.

All organized forces in the community, with the exception of the weakened Socialist Party and the trade unions, contributed their share to help defeat London. The non-Socialist Jewish press carried on a venomous propaganda against him, harping chiefly on the nationalistic and religious strings. One of these newspapers discovered the fact that London had attended a session of Congress on the Day of Atonement, and it raised the cry that

by doing this he "had disgraced the Jewish religion and insulted the religious feelings of every orthodox Jew in America." As this story was told in the newspapers it was made to appear that the Gentile Congressmen were shocked on seeing London enter the House on the Jewish Holy Day. It played up the story in the best manner of yellow journalism. It went on to say that when the fact of London's crime became known, "the synagogues buzzed with the news . . . in assembled congregations on the East Side this was the main topic of conversation and all those who spoke of it gave expression to their great resentment and indignation at the audacity of the Socialists, who nominated as a representative of the East Side a man who has no respect for the Jewish name." The leaders of Tammany Hall, suddenly overcome with Jewish piety, used the story to the limit.

The Poale Zionists ridiculed London's scruples regarding the right of the Jews to take Palestine away from its Arab inhabitants. London had declared that he would endorse the Balfour Declaration if it did not conflict with the Socialist principle of "no annexation" and "self-determination of small nationalities." The Poale Zionists, therefore, accused London of being only "a half or quarter Jew, who was more detrimental to the Jewish cause than a non-Jew."

The heaviest artillery was brought into play on the eve of election. First came an appeal to the East Side issued by Theodore Roosevelt in which the ex-President thundered, "Mr. London, by his actions in Congress, has shown his agreement with the Socialist anti-war platform. Under these circumstances I fail to see how any upright and honest citizen or any patriotic American can vote for him. Mr. London's votes show that he has a right to the support of the Germanized Socialists. He has no right to the vote of patriotic American citizens."

This blast was followed by appeals from conservative Jewish leaders, Jacob H. Schiff, Louis Marshall, Samuel Untermyer, Abram I. Elkus, Nathan Straus and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. Some of these gentlemen came to the East Side in person and made

their appeals at large mass meetings. London was hurting the good name of the Jews in America, he was giving the Jews a bad reputation and engendering prejudice against them. Samuel Untermyer directed his appeal to the radical workers, assuring them that the Democratic party would give the workingmen all that the Socialists promised. "The Democratic party stands to-day," he said, "committed to the great social reforms demanded by the people. These reforms can be best accomplished through that agency." He went on to picture a veritable millennium of peace and good will and happiness that a Democratic victory was sure to bring. He ended by urging the election of Henry M. Goldfogle, London's opponent, in order that the East Side might share in the glory of bringing this heaven to earth.

But in spite of these tremendous efforts on the part of the queerly associated enemies and in spite of the internal dissension in the Socialist ranks, the sentiment of the East Side favored London. He made his appeal on his record, reminding the voters of what he did in his two terms in the House and asking them to judge for themselves whether he had represented them fairly and honestly. In a frank statement to the public issued at the opening of the campaign, London gave his reasons why he thought he was entitled to reëlection.

"I am no 'rubber stamp' Congressman. I am not afraid to speak my mind. I have not hesitated to vote alone against all of them when duty demanded it. I stand on my record. I have made my district known to Congress and I have introduced Congress to the district by frequent reports to my constituents. Protesting against existing and against attempted wrong, I have never failed to point out the things that are beautiful in American life. I have never lost sight of the fact that America is the land of promise and worth fighting and dying for. . . . I worked and voted against every step that tended to lead this country to war, but I accepted without any reservation the decision of the country. I wonder whether I am to be punished for having had the courage to vote against war or for standing by my country's

decision when it chose war. As the only Socialist in Congress I was the interpreter in the House of Representatives of all that is broad and universal in President Wilson's international policies. Am I to be repudiated because I have been fighting for social insurance, for freedom of speech and press, against mob violence and for open diplomacy? Am I to be refused the chance to serve the people during the reconstruction period; shall I be prevented from urging public and democratic control of public utilities, the curbing of the profiteer, national enfranchisement of women, the limitation of the power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional? Shall I no longer be able to plead for the poor and the helpless? . . . Or shall my political career be cut short because I have been more regular in attending upon the sessions of Congress than any New York Democrat, or because I have probably attended more sessions of Congress than all the Tammany Congressmen combined?"

The unions gave him their unanimous support.

But Tammany knew how to overcome the balance weighing the scales on London's side. It had nothing to fear, nobody to reckon with. All sources of public opinion were dammed against the Socialists. Tammany went into the election armed with its old weapons of repeaters and floaters and trained clerks who always knew how to handle ballots. After the count was made its election officials announced that London was defeated by 700 votes. The official figures were 7,269 for Goldfogle and 6,519 for London.

A cry of triumph went up when the result became known. "It was a mighty good day's work to defeat Meyer London," said the *Times*. The *Mail* called it "one of the most interesting and significant results of the election, this sweeping repudiation of Socialism by the American people." The *Brooklyn Standard Union* hailed the news with an editorial headed "Socialism's Menace Checked."

It did seem like a repudiation. The very newspapers that had

supported London in his previous campaigns had now worked for his defeat. Prominent Jews who had been associated with him in Jewish affairs talked of him as an enemy of the Jews. But London and his party leaders were convinced that despite all unfavorable circumstances his defeat was due to Tammany's election day crookedness, abetted by its Republican allies. His first impulse was to contest his election and ask for a recount. He issued a statement to that effect, saying, "I have obtained evidence of wholesale frauds in 11 out of 31 election districts. In one instance where I received 190 votes I was credited with 123; Goldfogle received 90 votes and was credited with 150. One of the Socialist watchers told me that the ballots were taken from the boxes and passed by the election inspectors, still folded, to the Republican captain, by whom they were passed to the Tammany captain. The progressive and Socialist watchers were not permitted to see the ballots at all and when one progressive watcher protested, he was assaulted."

Even before election day many Socialist citizens had brought complaints to London that they had been prevented from registering or that their names had been dropped from the lists after they had registered. London tested some of these cases in court but in each case the Tammany and Republican inspectors were there with specious tales which the court readily accepted.

Here are some characteristic letters sent by London's campaign manager to these complainants.

"Dear Sir:—I am told that the court denied the application to compel your registration because your name does not appear on your father's naturalization papers."

"My dear Sir:—I am informed that the inspectors at the polling place where you tried to register swore that you never appeared there and that the court accepted their version, refusing to issue an order for your registration."

"My dear Sir:—I am told that the court denied our application to issue an order compelling your registration. The inspectors swore that each time you appeared you were unable to give

the date of your naturalization papers, and the court which issued them."

"Dear Madam:—I am told that the court denied your application to compel your registration as a result of the testimony given by the inspectors that you were unable to give the date of your marriage."

After due consideration, however, London and the party thought the better of it and decided not to contest. It concluded that the time was unpropitious for a Socialist contest against the combined forces of both political parties. London accepted his defeat but he knew that the East Side worker and small tradesman that had sent him to Congress as their spokesman in 1914 and again in 1916 believed in his sincerity and integrity and he also knew that he had spoken their thoughts and aspirations on the floor of Congress. He now went back to Washington to finish his term as he had begun it, to fight for the same ideals and principles that had earned him the animosity of the officious press and professional patriots. He knew that when the East Side would shed its fears and its war excitement and do its own thinking it would again turn to him and ask him to be its interpreter and spokesman before the people of America.

CHAPTER XXVII

London and the American Federation of Labor

The Socialist Party of pre-war days considered Samuel Gompers' leadership of the American Labor movement reactionary, a deterrent to progress, and a most serious barrier to the advance of political Socialism. The leaders of the Socialist Party on this side of the Atlantic contemplated with envy the powerful organizations of their comrades in the European countries where the trade union movements were integral parts of the Socialist movement. They were convinced that the rank and file could be made politically class conscious if it were not for its conservative leadership. In the early days, when it was still permeated with De Leonism, the Socialist Party tended to be intolerant and often unfair in its attacks on the Federation officials. It frequently refused to credit the Federation leaders with an honest difference of opinion. Conservative action by unions was denounced by some Socialists as betrayal of the workers. The Socialist rank and file were taught to regard with distrust every non-Socialist Federation official and to do their utmost to wrest the Federation from the hands of Gompers and his followers in order to put in their place bona fide Socialists.

With the passage of time this attitude of extreme hostility was modified. As the radical unions, principally in the needle trades, solidified into permanent organizations and were faced with practical problems and responsibility, they were drawn nearer to their brethren in the conservative unions. Mutual understanding developed. Gompers and the other chiefs of the Federation came to address meetings of striking needle workers, and men and women who knew little of the American labor move-

ment learned to their surprise that these conservatives were genuine trade unionists, often using the same vocabulary to describe the employers and to arouse the workers to unity and zeal as did the Socialist leaders. There were, of course, numbers of "rank and filers" who refused to listen to those they considered "misleaders." But on the whole the conflict between the Socialists and the conservative trade unionists rose to the higher plane of honest difference of opinion.

Gradually a division developed among the Socialists on the question of their attitude towards Gompers. In their own councils, among their own people and at Socialist Party meetings and gatherings, the Socialist leaders seemed to be in full accord. There they all spoke the same language of criticism of Gompers, of censure of Gompers' methods and actions. But the responsible leaders of the radical unions and particularly the elected heads of the organization behaved quite differently when they came in contact with the Federation heads in the course of their union work. They evinced a desire to be friends, to work together harmoniously. They also displayed the proper respect due to official superiors and a desire to please and be in the good graces of the chiefs. Some of these Socialist leaders acted from a deep sense of esteem for the achievements of the Federation; others possibly, from expediency, bearing in mind the benefits their organizations might derive from the good will of the active heads of the Federation.

Those prominent Socialists whose chief activities lay in the trade unions strove in the direction of a better understanding with the American Federation of Labor, but they seldom dared to formulate their sentiments in a frank declaration to themselves or their followers. They knew that such an act would meet with the opposition of the political Socialists, who concentrated on creating a Socialist sentiment in the unions as the party grew in strength and influence among the workers. Thus was a division of tendency developed between the trade union Socialists and the political Socialists—a division that neither group thought it

advisable to drag into the open, but that the more knowing watched with anxiety.

London's position in the movement was rather exceptional. From the very beginning of his career he attached himself with equal zeal to both branches of the labor movement—the political and the industrial. He appeared as often on trade union platforms as on the Socialist Party platform. He advocated industrial organization with as much passion as he urged political organization. He was as deep in the councils of the Jewish unions as he was in the councils of the Socialist branches on the East Side and of the Party's national organization.

As a Socialist, London regretted Gompers' political policies, but as a trade unionist he admired Gompers' sincerity and practical sense in the cause of labor. He never joined the political Socialists in their battles against Gompers, nor did he follow the trade unions officials in their sterile political policies. He urged an equal allegiance to both branches of the labor movement. He believed that if the trade unions of this country were politically backward, responsibility rested not necessarily with Gompers but with the membership at large. He therefore judged Gompers not by what he failed to do in the political field but by what he did in the industrial field.

And Gompers, shrewd judge of men that he was, took a correct measure of London at the time he first made his acquaintance. He reciprocated London's feelings towards him. He was willing to overlook what he considered London's mistaken views on independent labor politics because of his correct views on trade unionism and his magnificent services to that cause. Gompers knew that he could trust London to stand by labor and to handle its practical problems as a practical friend and not as a theoretician.

So we find Gompers endorsing London's candidacy for Congress as far back as 1910, at a time when the Socialists in the American Federation were calling for the overthrow of the Gompers régime. To a voter in London's district a few weeks before

election day Gompers wrote a letter which read as follows:

"Dear Sir and brother:—I have your postal card of recent date, saying that you are a cloakmaker living in the 9th Congressional District (later the 12th) of New York where Mr. Meyer London, attorney for the cloakmakers, is running for Congress, and you make this inquiry, 'Should I, as a union man, and not as a Socialist, work and vote for him?' You also say, 'I should like to know your opinion of him.' I have no hesitation whatever in saying to you that Mr. Meyer London is deserving of the highest credit for his services in connection with the cloakmakers' strike. His devotion to the cause of labor has rarely been equaled by any man and never exceeded in my opinion by any attorney engaged to look after the interest of the workers. Mr. London did not hesitate for one moment when he saw his duty and where he could be of service to the cloakmakers in the gigantic struggle. For his services and his devotion, it is my candid and outspoken opinion that you are in duty bound to give Mr. London every possible support within your power. An attorney with such a clear grasp and intelligent conception of the working class struggle would be a wonderful power for good in the interest of labor and the whole people, should he be elected to Congress. His knowledge, his energy, his devotion and his integrity should win for him the undying devotion of every union man living within the 9th Congressional District in New York City."

Five years later, when London took his seat as the lone Socialist representative in the House, Gompers counted him among the so-called "labor group," old party trade union members, as was evidenced by two invitations London received from him in the course of his first month in Washington. On December 10, 1915, Gompers wrote:

"Honorable Meyer London, House of Representatives, Dear Sir:—Several members of the House of Representatives who hold cards of membership in trade unions have asked me to invite all members of Congress who hold trade union cards to a con-

ference, to discuss measures which particularly affect the rights and the welfare of the working people. In compliance with this request I ask whether you can meet with other members of Congress and a few of the representatives of organized labor."

On December 31, London received the following invitation:

"Dear Sir:—The cornerstone of the American Federation of Labor Building will be laid at 12 o'clock noon, Saturday, Jan. 8, 1916. Won't you make an effort to be present and aid in the performance of the ceremony? With best wishes for a Happy New Year, I am very truly yours, Samuel Gompers."

About the same time London made public his views as to the relations that should exist between the Federation and the Socialists. He said:

"The Socialists should work in harmony with the Federation. I know of no conspiracy on the part of the Socialists to destroy or injure the Federation of Labor. I have spent my life in the Federation's activities and with the Socialists. The unions have a lot to learn and the Socialists are not perfect. The unions and the Socialists constitute growing institutions and it should be the policy of the Socialists to adjust any differences. I consider Mr. Gompers a big factor in the American labor movement, and I have great admiration for him personally."

However, the hopes of Gompers and London for mutual agreement and mutual help in their separate fields of activity in Washington did not materialize. For one, Gompers completely surrendered to the Wilson war policy, and London remained to the last the severe and implacable critic of the war and the war measures for which Wilson was responsible. But even in matters pertaining exclusively to labor London found himself at variance with Gompers. The two most striking instances were the questions of social insurance and of immigration.

The measure for social insurance London introduced as soon as he entered upon his duties in Congress. On this measure he had concentrated all his efforts and all his hopes during the long months that elapsed between his election and his inaugura-

tion into office. He was determined to see this bill through Congress and entered upon the statute books. To achieve his aim he counted largely on the assistance of organized labor and also upon the support of the progressive element and enlightened students of public problems. Keen, therefore, must have been his disappointment when Gompers came out in open opposition to the bill before the committee of the House where its fate was to have been decided. Gompers' opposition to London's measure grew out of his aversion to outside agencies in labor matters. In his speech he went so far as to oppose practically all labor legislation as a matter of principle. He felt that what the unions could not win by organization should not be secured by law.

Of course not all of the leaders of the Federation agreed with Gompers. William Green, then the secretary and treasurer of the United Mine Workers, who was destined to succeed Gompers to the presidency of the Federation, lent his full support. He wrote:

"Honorable Meyer London:—I acknowledge receipt of your favor of July 7th containing copy of social insurance resolution now appearing upon the calendar of the House of Representatives. We will gladly help in having this passed in any way we can. Yours truly, William Green."

Even more encouraging was the letter London received from William H. Johnston, International President of the Machinists:

"Dear Mr. London:—This is to acknowledge your favor of July 10th. I wish to express my appreciation of the services you are rendering to the workers and I wish to assure you that the International Association of Machinists endorsed your action in trying to secure the legislation referred to. I regret exceedingly that I have been so crowded with organization matters that I have not been able to meet you. But I trust in the near future I may have that pleasure, as well as conferring and coöperating in all your activities, which I am convinced are to the best interests of the working class."

Gompers' opposition to such labor legislation was not repre-

sentative of the sentiments of the whole labor movement. The Socialist leaven had worked.

London's reaction to Gompers' hostile attitude was expressed in a private letter to a friend. He wrote,

"Our friend Mr. Gompers has an inalienable right to consider all those who are not connected with the labor movement bug-ologists. Human society is a mighty big bug and those who study human society are mighty big bug-ologists. So you need not worry about Mr. Gompers. His struggle to improve conditions of the working people has been a hard one, the progress slow and painful. I can understand him when he seeks to have every man and woman who amounts to something join in pushing the trade union movement forward."

On the question of immigration London had always taken the extreme view of those internationalists who refuse to recognize any discrimination whatever between peoples and races. The doors of all countries must always remain wide open to admit all people of all ranks who wish to enter. In this London encountered opposition not only in the conservative American Federation but even in his own Socialist Party. The question was introduced for the first time at a national convention that the Party held in 1910, where London sat as a delegate from New York. The committee on resolutions proposed that the convention favor restriction on Asiatic immigration, a favorite measure of the Pacific Coast and of the labor movement. In the debate that developed London delivered a powerful speech against that proposal. He said:

"As a delegate representing a foreign-speaking national organization I desire to say that I participated in the formation of the first branch of the Social Democracy of America and that I had the honor of being a delegate to the national convention of the Social Democratic Party ten years ago. . . . The majority report is faulty in this—it violates a fundamental principle of Socialism, which prohibits you from discriminating against a race. One of the most painful things in life that I have been acquainted

with is the murder of Chinese by thugs and ruffians. When you say, 'we will exclude people because they are Japanese and because they are Chinese and because they are Hindus,' you violate the Decalogue, one of the elementary principles of international Socialism. . . . I do not speak in behalf of the Jewish immigrants, because we are not concerned. There are no restrictive laws against us. But I do speak in behalf of all the oppressed races and I say that by adopting a resolution pointing to particular races, you have put upon the great mass of Japanese and Chinese the stamp of inferiority. That is your own act, and it is not in accordance with the principles of the international movement, or even with the ordinary principles of fair dealing and honesty or the principles of Americanism as I understand them."

The Socialist Party never reached a conclusion on this question. The convention sidetracked it by adopting a declaration connecting Asiatic immigration with contract labor. A committee was appointed to study the question and report at the next convention. In 1912, when the next convention met, the same division of opinion existed and another postponement was taken. And so the question remained in the air as far as the Socialist Party was concerned, for at the next convention no one thought of anything but war.

The group in the Socialist Party that favored restriction of Asiatic immigration repeated the arguments of the Federation leaders, giving them a Socialist coloring. In their report to the convention of 1912 they did not confine themselves to Asiatic labor. They tried to prove that under present circumstances immigration is a capitalist weapon against organized labor. It characterized London's argument of workmen's solidarity the world over as "sentimental and Utopian."

During the Taft administration a determined drive began against immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe. A Congressional commission that had been appointed to study the problem recommended that immigration from those countries be restricted largely on the ground that the unrestricted influx of

Southern and Eastern Europeans had produced an over-supply of unskilled labor. The commission recommended a "reading and writing test" as a most favorable single method of bringing about the desired restriction. Congress passed the bill calling for a literacy test but it was vetoed by the President. The bill was introduced again in the following Congress, was again passed by an overwhelming majority in both Houses, only to meet the same fate at the hands of the new executive. Nothing daunted, the enemies of immigration tried again in 1916. By that time the European war and the preparedness propaganda had prejudiced the minds of millions against foreigners and induced fear and suspicion of immigrants. The bill went through both Houses with big majorities and when Wilson again rejected it Congress passed it over his veto.

In all these years that the measures for restriction were being pushed in Washington, the Jewish immigrants watched every move with the deepest concern. They were vitally interested in defeating the bill for more than one reason. First, it cast a slur on their race. It sought to bar out immigrants of certain countries and races, implying their inferiority to others, and Jews were included in the discriminated groups. Second, the Jews could ill afford to have the doors of this country shut against them. Most of the immigrants here still had their nearest and dearest on the other side and their most earnest hope was to earn enough to be able to send for them. Any added hardship in the realization of their dream was dreaded as a great misfortune. There was, thirdly, the old problem of Jewish persecution in Russia and other European countries. Where would these unfortunate ones seek refuge if the doors of this country were barred?

During the campaign of 1914 the immigration question was much discussed. London's opponent recalled the discussion in the Socialist convention of a restrictive policy and a "whispering campaign" was started that London was an enemy of immigration and that his party was against the immigrant. A few days

before election day London received letters from citizens in his district, asking about these rumors.

This is what he replied to one of these inquiries:

"My dear Sir:—I have just received your letter containing the inquiry whether I am in favor of closing our doors to immigration and whether I favor a literacy test. . . I am opposed to the restriction of immigration. I am opposed to the literacy test. I appeared before the Committee of Immigration and spoke against the literacy test and other oppressive and humiliating restrictions advocated by Democratic Congressmen and Senators. The Socialist Party, of which I am proud to be a member, is the Party of emancipation. It advocates international solidarity and is necessarily opposed to restriction of immigration. I have been a Socialist all my life but if ever a day should come when the Socialist Party will become opposed to free immigration I would not hesitate to sever my relations with the Socialist Party."

In Congress London fought most valiantly against every restrictive law that was introduced. He appeared before the Committee on Immigration and spoke on the floor of the House. He led a hearing before the President. In his attacks on the restriction bills he was as unsparing of the labor restrictionists as of the prejudiced haters of foreigners. In his speech against the literacy test bill delivered in March, 1916, he charged that the bill was being railroaded by a combination of Southern politicians and trade union officials.

London declared in that speech that there were three principal elements in the anti-immigration movement. The first was the Southern politician, seeking to maintain a submerged labor class of native illiterates on the pretense of preserving America for Americans. The second was the stupid labor leaders who imagined that by shutting out a certain class of newcomers they would permanently better the condition of the members of their unions. The third was the purely ignorant and prejudiced element, strangely forgetful of the fact that the white population of America was wholly of immigrant origin. London called atten-

tion to the fact that there were close to 16 per cent of native white illiterates in Alabama, the native state of Representative Burnett, who had introduced the literacy test bill.

"Down there, in Alabama, they do not want to have any white labor," London said, "because white labor organizes in unions and fights. They want child labor and they want subservient, docile labor of a suppressed and submerged race."

Of the hostile labor leaders London said:

"If these men were in earnest they would demand a reduction of the hours of labor. They would demand unemployment insurance. They would demand that two million children be taken out of the factories and mines and quarries by law, making the work of the child impossible. They would demand laws making the toil of four million women in factories impossible, so that women would not compete with their fathers, brothers and husbands."

At the committee hearing he again dwelt on the argument of organized labor:

"I am opposed to the literacy test, although I have devoted all my life to the interest of organized labor. I believe organized labor has been the greatest factor for good, not only for the working class but for the Americar people. However, in opposing immigration they are on the wrong track. They point only to the immigrant as their enemy. Instead they should take the millions of women and children who compete with the men out of the factories and mills.

"They might as well prohibit the birth of children," he continued, "because every child that is born to the working man is a greater burden upon him than any immigrant that may arrive. They are following the old fallacy advocated by Malthus in 1798. He spoke of the evils to mankind of overpopulation, when America had a population of only three million people. In 1845 the British labor unions conducted a big national strike which they lost. A number of men who participated in it could not get employment and were compelled to emigrate. And the

British unions created an emigration fund to aid their unfortunate brothers in seeking refuge in America. To my way of thinking every human being has a right to go to any part of the world and no man has a right to claim that any particular section of the globe has been especially designed by the Almighty for him. God has never issued such a decree."

And when Mr. Albert Johnson, one of the sponsors of the bill, interrupted with the question, "Do you include the Chinese?" London answered, "The Chinese are human beings." London remained faithful to the international Socialist principles which he had so vigorously defended at the Socialist convention six years before.

The Labor press was indignant at London's stand. He was censured by some and upbraided by others. However, they always qualified their attacks with tribute to his services and his sincere devotion to the cause of labor. Typical of the comments in the labor press was the following, appearing in the *Free Press* of Trinidad, California. "A number of Socialist publications have showered Meyer London with encomiums of praise for his attitude against the bill, regardless of the fact that it had the support of the labor movement of America. No one who is acquainted with the record of Congressman London will for a moment doubt his honesty and sincerity. But Congressman London with all his ability and eloquence to plead for the downtrodden and oppressed can scarcely lay claim to infallibility."

London was not an extremist in his views on trade unionism. He knew too much of the practical side of the problem to be deceived by theoretical mirages. He knew how hard it was to keep the workers in the union ranks, what a dreadful amount of suffering was involved in every strike for better conditions. As a Socialist he believed that the trade unions should be recruiting grounds for the Socialist ranks, but he was opposed to leading the unions into revolutionary activities. When the Industrial Workers of the World appeared on the scene and attempted to wedge their way into the Jewish labor movement

London did all in his power to block their path. While he preached higher idealism and class consciousness to the man in the unions, while he sought to infuse them with the spirit of Socialist morality, he urged the men to be sane and practical in matters pertaining to the shop and the trade. He never used provocative language against individual employers, though he was unsparing in denouncing their avarice and oppression. He discouraged the workers from employing extreme methods in strikes. To him the chief aim of the union was to gain an easier life for its members and he believed that extreme methods would eventually play into the hands of the employers and bring disaster to the union.

But while he preached moderation in the ranks of his own people, he never joined with the enemies of labor in denouncing those labor leaders who entertained different views from his. He fought the extremists inside the labor ranks but was ever ready to defend them against an outside enemy.

Thus, when the McNamara tragedy occurred his public attitude differed widely from the attitude of the high officials of the American Federation of Labor. Whereas the Federation leaders denounced the McNamaras, officials of the Structural Iron Workers' Union, as traitors and criminals for setting off the bomb that killed twenty-five people, London extended them sympathy and pleaded for understanding and forgiveness for their errors. The statement that he published at the time reveals his deep humanity as well as his firm class solidarity. He said:

"How silly to call them traitors! I pity these boys with all my heart and the pity of all thinking people should go out to them. Criminals! It would be vulgar to call them that. It would be unjust, untrue. I would ask mercy for them not only from the trial judge but from all American people as well. We must consider them on a different plane from that on which we consider our criminals. We must judge them as we would judge fanatics. They are fanatics of a social cause. They believed in

fighting for their cause and their tactics, foolish tactics that went sadly astray, and they struck a blow at lives they did not wish to crush. The pity of it all! The great, deep, underlying pity of it is that no matter how just its cause and fair its arguments labor must fight, must fight desperately for every inch of ground it gains. To me it is infinitely important that society measure adequately the reason why some millions of people on one side immediately concluded that the McNamara brothers were the innocent victims of a conspiracy and why some millions of people on the other side immediately concluded that they were guilty—before any of the case had been presented to a court. If we could judge adequately why there was a splitting here on such marked lines of rival sympathies, it would bring a result far greater than if we could judge fairly how many years these unfortunates shall spend in jail. That is trivial in comparison.

"They had in this town a great fire (March 25, 1911), where 147 girls lost their lives. Harris & Blanck, who locked the doors for fear the girls would steal, are still untried and unwhipped by justice. Yet I do not feel that it would do much good to put these men behind bars. I do not clamor for their conviction. They are not the only employers. They were just the victims of a mad scramble for dollars in which children, women and men do not count. They did what most of their kind did who played the game according to the accepted rule. If the McNamara case can result in a revision of tactics on the part of labor it will be a vast and good lesson. More education, more sweetness, more light, more humanity is going to help us along. More dynamiting, more harsh sentences to prison and more cruel and rigid drawing of lines, more hatred where there should be more kindness, can never do it."

CHAPTER XXVIII

Demobilization Problems

The defeat at the polls did not dampen London's spirit. In December he returned to Washington to complete his term. Although the war had been ended a month before, reaction was still raging through the land with an ever-growing momentum. The laws to restrict the rights and liberties of the people passed as war emergency measures were now utilized to threaten and oppress, to prosecute and persecute all those who incurred the dislike of government officials. The one restraint on the despotic passions of the rulers—the fear of weakening the war morale of the masses—had now disappeared. The war was over. It was no longer necessary to tolerate even the idealistic sermons of the President. The reactionaries could now dare to act audaciously and brazenly and they proceeded to do so with the cruelty and brutality that the war had made familiar.

Two specters, one real and the other imaginary, egged on the reactionaries to their war on Socialists and radicals. They scented real danger from the returning army, the demobilized millions. These men had been promised the millennium if they brought back victory. They had been told that if the enemy was defeated they would never want for anything, that they would have "a land fit for heroes." President Wilson had filled their heads with illusions of grandeur. Now they were coming back, expecting to cash in on all the beautiful promises. But waiting to meet them was sad disappointment. As Debs said, "They were told they were heroes, and found they were hoboes." They found factories either closing for reconstruction from a war to a peace basis or operating with women and older men who had

taken their places. What would the disappointed and deceived men do? How would they react to the shock? The employers and their friends in the government bethought themselves of the Socialists and radicals. Here were men ready to take hold of the threatening discontent, organize it and lead it to battle. This must be prevented. The danger must be eliminated before it got a chance to get under way.

The imaginary specter was the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. A large number of Socialists and radicals had been watching events in that country with their hearts full of hope and joy. A social revolution had been achieved—might it not be the beginning of the great day, the ushering in of the Socialist order in all civilized countries? They were too intoxicated with joy to think logically, to observe accurately. The more zealous among them lost their heads completely and shouted for an immediate revolution to emulate the comrades in Soviet Russia.

To prevent real trouble from the returning soldiers and imaginary troubles from the supporters of the Bolshevik Revolution, a reactionary terror was let loose upon the people. Every man who dared raise his voice against prevailing injustice or to defend the rights of the people was denounced as a Bolshevik. Industrial workers were arrested wholesale and sent to prison for terms ranging from ten to twenty years. Non-citizen radicals were hunted down, apprehended and deported. For distributing circulars calling for sympathy for Russia, a young girl was sentenced to imprisonment for not less than fifteen years. Five leading officials of the Socialist national organization, including Victor L. Berger, were sentenced to twenty years in Leavenworth. And Judge Landis, who imposed sentence, expressed his regret for the leniency. "I believe the laws of the land should have enabled me to have Berger lined up against a wall and shot," said the dispenser of justice. Teachers were thrown out of their positions in schools, lawyers were disbarred. Everywhere spies snooped for victims. The air was poisoned with suspicion and fear. The country went crazy for two or three years—the years

of the Lusk Committee, the Albany Ouster, and of deportations.

In Washington the reactionaries were girding for a fight against the Wilson ideals. The President had gone to the Versailles peace conference prepared to put the entire world to rights by the power of his oratory. While he was being hailed there by the masses as a Messiah come to save them and fêted by the shrewd statesmen as a half-mad fanatic who must be humored, the reactionaries here were rapidly neutralizing the effects of Wilson's high promises and lofty avowals. They were disinfecting the air, banishing from it all the beauty of spirit invoked by Wilson's idealistic speeches in behalf of the great crusade of the European war.

In this stifling atmosphere of reaction London had to finish the last few months of his second term and he was there with the stigma of defeat and repudiation. What would he do? Would he dare to speak in defense of his supposedly discredited Socialist principles? Would he use the same strong language? The same defiant militant tone?

The curious had not long to wait for the answer. On January 2, 1919, he delivered a speech with that spirit, vigor and defiance that he had ever displayed. The question before the House was a proposal that the government pay each discharged soldier six months' salary. London obtained the privilege to speak for twenty minutes. He began:

> It seems that it is impossible to deliver an address now on any public question without using two words, Bolshevism and Reconstruction. Any fool proposition goes under Reconstruction and any new idea is opposed as Bolshevism. The hypocrite, the sycophant, the coward, the man who follows the mob, the defender of selfish and unclean interests, who would preserve everything that is vile in the present society, all of them dread every new thought and every new idea. They speak of Bolshevism as if they knew what it was, as if it represented the very incarnation of all that is evil, as if it was hell let loose. And whenever any new thought is advanced, whenever a suggestion is made urging

that we learn something from the sacrifices of the last four years, immediately we are met with the retort, "Oh! you are advocating Bolshevism!" When the President of the United States in one of his letters used the sententious phrase that the returning soldiers would not tolerate industrial serfdom, one of the New York newspapers inquired editorially, "Where did the President get that Bolshevik phrase?" When the recently elected Governor of New York [Alfred E. Smith] in a long and rather interesting message to the legislature of the state suggested in somewhat vague terms a number of things that ought to be done in the direction of social education, a political opponent, as a sort of reply to the message of the Governor said, "We should not cater to any Bolshevik tendencies." He saw in the modest suggestion of the Governor for a minimum wage, legislation for women and children, and health insurance, the coming of the dreaded Bolsheviki.

I have no time to take up the subject—I wish I had. It is a new word. It is a new bugaboo. It is something new to threaten people with. Since Socialism has been recognized as a legitimate theory and since the Socialist movement has compelled statesmen and politicians to borrow its raiment, to borrow some of its thought and some of its philosophy, those that are interested in combating the advance of Socialist thought have conjured up a new horror, that of Bolshevism.

All this by way of introduction. As to the proposition under discussion, London declared it to be a sop thrown to the deceived and betrayed soldiers.

The war was supposed to have been fought that the world be made free, that nations may be made free democracies. There can be no such thing as a free nation and a free people unless the individual man and the individual woman who compose the community are free to live a full life and free to develop intellectually, physically and spiritually, and unless the social structure of society gives them that opportunity every other form of democracy is a fraud. Every other form of government which does not give to the great majority of the people an opportunity to develop individually, is not a democracy.

> The great sacrifices that have been made by the world will be of no avail unless we realize this fundamental truth. The democratic elements of Europe are awakening to certain hopes. They have suffered more and they have learned more than we.

And London went on to remind the House of what they had done to his bills proposing that Congress make necessary preparations to provide for the unemployed and the needy during the period of reconstruction. "I have been insistent in urging it, you have been insistent in disregarding it." But London is not discouraged. He does not give up. He continues arguing anew for the same proposals, that the government assume full responsibility for the army of unemployed which was about to be created.

> You must take up the problem of the returning soldiers, as part of the problem to improve the economic condition of the masses. You must think not only of the soldier but of those now employed whose job the returning soldier will take. Assume that all employers will be patriotic—I question their patriotism, for I know that every time the Washington rent profiteer doubled his rent he doubled the size of his flag—assume that every time a soldier asks for his job he will get it. What about the man and woman whose job this soldier will take?
>
> We could not trust the great magnates of industry during the time of war when the cause of sacrifice should have appealed to all; the government had to take hold of them, curb them and control them. If we could not trust them in times of war, when the patriotic appeal was so strong, how can we trust them in times of peace? How can you permit them to go unchecked and unregulated by the public conscience?
>
> Let there be no giving of gifts. Let there be no idleness or compensation for idleness. Let the principle be embodied in life that he who does not work has no right to live. Unfortunately that principle does not apply on top of society today. Establish a system of unemployment insurance. Provide for government works, provide if necessary that the government should run some of the industries now in private

> hands. Let the people learn how to run industries. Let the government take up one industry after another, taking up first the most suitable industry so that the worker will know that he owes a duty to society to work and to be useful, and that in return society owes him a duty of a wage which will enable him to live a man's life.

The truth of all that London had foretold in the previous sessions of Congress when the war was still on was now coming into evidence. The President's peace program and his ideals of international harmony and good-will got no support either among the statesmen abroad or the politicians here. Even before the Peace Conference had time to convene the militarists began their drive for increased armaments, for extensive preparations for the next war. While Wilson was still cherishing his dream of a League of Nations and of spreading the message of perpetual peace all over Europe, Congress was discussing appropriation bills for the building of new battleships. It was now even more certain to London as well as to all Socialists that the people had been misled and betrayed by the war-mongers. And he proclaimed it on the floor of Congress:

> We have before us a bill appropriating for the purpose of a navy a sum of money which only a short time ago was considered sufficient for all purposes of the government, a sum of money larger than the total annual pre-war appropriations of all European countries combined. We are asked to impose upon the people this heavy burden after the war had been won. We thought we were through with war prices—we were evidently mistaken. It looks as if the armies and navies of the Allies had won the war but the people had lost the war. Instead of general rejoicing such as one would expect after the conclusion of the great struggle there is fear, restlessness, uncertainty and anxiety—anxiety as to the present, anxiety as to the future.

The good that the war was supposed to bring was dead and forgotten but the evil it created continued its lusty and vigorous life; the terror of the Espionage and Sedition Laws, the persecution

of all "undesirables" as dangerous Bolsheviki, did not abate, and nobody seemed to care. The voices of justice and freedom had been strangled into silence during the war period. London standing on the tribunal of Congress was practically the only one who reminded the nation of the violence that was being committed to its most sacred institutions. He demanded immediate repeal of the Espionage Law. He demanded that a stop be put to the terrorism against Socialists and radicals and that a check be put upon the lies that were being broadcast against the Bolsheviki.

The longest speech on the subject London delivered in the middle of February. When he rose to speak he had obtained the privilege of the floor for only a few minutes, but his caustic remarks stung some of the opponents to challenging retorts. Twice his time was extended to answer these challenges and as usual he availed himself of the opportunity to make out an even stronger case for his side.

In presenting his case he was comparatively mild at first.

> The war is over and still we have not repealed the Espionage Act or the so-called Sedition bill. It never was an Espionage Act. No one would ever vote against a bill which punished a spy. There is no more damnable crime than spying in time of war. But what they called the Espionage Bill is a bill to check, regulate and control speech, control the press and control thought. Hundreds and thousands of men are lingering in jails today because they dared to express views which are unpopular in times of war. Hundreds and thousands of men are in jails today because they dared proclaim a political philosophy which ran contrary to the philosophy of the moment.
>
> There was an old sedition law in the 18th century, a sedition law which cost the political party responsible for it its life. Under that old sedition law only eleven persons were tried—the maximum penalty under that law was two years' imprisonment and a fine of $1,000. The only substantial fine imposed under that law was ordered returned by the subsequent Congress. Under the existing law the penalty is twenty years' imprisonment and a fine of $10,000. I can

> understand why the fine was fixed at $10,000 instead of $1,000. We are now ten times as rich. But why should it be twenty years instead of two? Is it because we appreciate liberty only to one-tenth of the extent that it was appreciated then?

Thereupon some of the Democratic and Republican gentlemen wished to know whether London believed that violence should go unpunished, or whether he was a believer in the doctrine of non-resistance. When he disposed of these questions they turned to the old trick of summoning the bogey of Bolshevism and confronting London with it. One Congressman wished to know whether the Socialists approved of the Bolshevik action of confiscating land without compensation to its owners. London could have refused to answer or could have disposed of the question in a few words, as it had no relation whatever to the subject under discussion. But this he did not do. He was glad of every opportunity to put in a defense of Russia and preach tolerance and justice to the Bolsheviki.

> The question is not whether you and I approve the particular step taken by a revolutionary government or of a particular constitution. I am distressed when a Democrat expresses hatred of the effort of the masses of Russia to liberate themselves. . . It took the little American Republic four years to establish a constitution and the constitution was adopted in secret and many delegates left the constitutional convention in disgust. . . It took the French Republic six or seven years before they adopted the constitution by a majority of one vote, and then they did not dare openly to proclaim that they were establishing a republic, but they smuggled in the word "republic" by saying "The President of the Republic shall be elected." That was the year 1878. See the slow progress of the world. The individual and the people collectively live through more in one year than it would take a generation to live through. The American people should treat with sympathy the efforts of the great Russian masses, their groping for liberty and their striving for a better state of society.

Then came another fling at the Bolsheviki from a Congressman who had accepted at face value the most extravagant stories about Russia. "Only recently," said the gentleman, "I saw published in one of the local papers of the city an alleged copy of a declaration made by some government in Russia and it appeared to me as though it advocated public ownership of women." London's answer to that was more in the nature of an attack on the accusers than of a defense of the accused.

> There was a meeting of prostitutes in San Francisco. That is in the United States of America. The prostitutes demanded certain rights. Now suppose some cheap Tory or some European aristocrat had exaggerated that meeting of prostitutes in San Francisco as a great national movement covering the United States. That is exactly what has been done by a press that seeks to exaggerate every little disagreeable thing that occurred in the Russian revolution. I saw reference to it in a syndicated paper published in Switzerland. It is very likely that such a thing should have happened in revolutionary times. Why, there was such a school of thought in France during the revolutionary days of the '30s. These are the excrescences, these are the exuberances, these are the absurdities of revolutionary days.
>
> Then let me say this to the gentleman, while the proclamation has shocked him so much I wonder whether he was equally shocked by the report of the ravages of unmentionable diseases under the best established methods of government? I wonder whether when he read the report of the horrible effect of unmentionable diseases upon the youth of America he did not ask himself the question whether under our present state of society millions of homes are destroyed, millions of children will be born abnormal because of the horrible effects of these diseases? The Soviet government has adopted a rather complex law dealing with the question of marriage and divorce. The question is not whether their constitution is good or bad. The question is whether the Russian people shall be permitted to solve their own problem in their own way.

Repeal the Espionage Law, cease the persecution of the Socialists, stop the deportation of alien radicals, treat Russia with

justice—this was the burden of London's remaining speeches in the House. He made the appeal in the name of American traditions, in the name of common sense and elementary human rights. He resorted to satire and emotional pleading. He argued from particular cases and from general principles. His last days in Congress he devoted to a superhuman effort to conquer the forces of darkness that had grown to such tremendous proportions during the war period.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Communist Break

After a year of internal struggle which grew more intense with the passing of time the Socialist Party split into two hostile camps. The democratic Socialists retained their hold on the party machinery and the left wing seceded and formed the Communist movement. The chief asset of the Communists was the widespread sympathy for the Russian Revolution among the radicals of the country. The principles and tactics preached by the Communists scarcely reached the ears of the masses, and those few who did hear of them could not and did not comprehend their meaning. Such phrases as "revolutionary class struggle," "dictatorship of the proletariat," "world revolution," "mass action," "civil war of the classes," were so many riddles, the key to which was held by Moscow. But this they knew, that the revolution had been accomplished in Russia, that a Socialist order was being established there, and that the capitalist governments of Europe and America were conspiring to prevent the consummation of one of the greatest of all events in the life of the human race.

The Communist appeal found its strongest response among the immigrants of the Russian nationalities. The Russian revolution was in the hands of the Bolsheviki. Against them were arrayed the old aristocracy and the generals and the reactionaries of the Czarist régime. The Bolsheviki were defending their country against the return of the old despotism of the knout and the dungeon. The Socialists of all lands loyally stood by the revolution and denounced all attempts to interfere with the Soviet government and did everything in their power for it. But the Communists claimed to be the only "close relations,"

the trustees of the Soviets. There were even among the Socialists prominent men and women who criticized some of the actions of the Soviets and predicted a sad end for the Bolshevik order.

The two years elapsing between London's defeat in 1918 and the next Congressional campaign in 1920 witnessed a serious weakening of the Socialist Party all over the country. Many deserted for the more glamorous Communist movement and thousands lapsed into political inactivity, disgusted by dissensions over unrealities and unable to endure the endless debates over abstract theories of revolution and of Russian politics and economics which had no practical significance for them. The Communists forced the fight into every branch of the Jewish movement, in the Party, in the unions and in the Workmen's Circle. They concentrated entirely upon discrediting and destroying the Socialist influence as a matter of principle, hoping that with the disappearance of the Socialists they would inherit the leadership of the powerful Jewish organizations and utilize them for their own ends.

Thus, when the campaign of 1920 began, the Socialist Party was but a shell of its former self. If its candidates in the Jewish districts had relied solely upon the Party to win the election for them they would all have gone down to defeat. But the unions and the Workmen's Circle were still under the Socialist influence and leadership. The magnificent records made by the Socialists in the municipal and state legislative bodies of New York were still fresh in the minds of the people, so that in the face of opposition from within and without the Socialist Party nevertheless elected three assemblymen and one state senator.

But the greatest victory of that year was the reëlection of Meyer London to Congress. London's victory was to a large extent a personal triumph. The Communists worked very hard to bring about his defeat. The leading spirits of the Communists were the same men that had carried on the vain fight against his renomination on the Socialist ticket in 1918. The Tammany organiza-

tion on the East Side had regained a large part of its old strength as a result of the war reaction, which beat back the radical workers and scared off a large number of their supporters. The campaign was conducted along the same lines as the one of 1918. The two old parties fused in the name of patriotism and put up a single candidate to oppose London. On election day the old Tammany methods of fraud were resorted to, resulting in the stealing of about two thousand votes. But in spite of everything, the majority for London was larger than those he had received in his previous successful campaigns.

London had made a deep personal impression on the minds and hearts of his constituents and on the labor organizations. And now that the war hysteria and hubbub was beginning to subside, these citizens recalled what London had done for their spiritual and material uplift, how courageously he had represented them in Congress, and they voted their renewed confidence in him. And so, to the disappointment of the Communists and the despair of Tammany, London was sent back by his old district for another term in the House of Representatives.

CHAPTER XXX

In Congress Again

Both national and international affairs were in an unsettled state. Warren G. Harding, the new Republican President, called the new Congress in special session the second week of April, 1921. The war had been over nearly two and one-half years but there still was no official peace, for the treaty brought back from Versailles by President Wilson had failed to meet the approval of the Senate. The difficulties with Russia seemed as remote from solution as ever. Internally, the country was beginning to feel the painful effects of reconstruction. There was a slackening in production and an increase in the army of the unemployed. The returning and demobilized soldiers were thrown upon the labor market and found it drugged with the discharged employees from the factories of the dismantled war industries. The rich, fearing a decrease in their war earnings, called for a reduction in taxation, and the employers for the same reason entered upon a campaign of wage reduction. Everybody preached readjustment, each from his own standpoint. The employer wanted it to mean lower wages for his men, a higher tariff and a cut in taxes; worker and consumer wanted it to mean higher wages to meet the new price levels.

The tacit truce between capital and labor established as a patriotic duty for the conduct of the war was no longer in operation, and each side hoped to benefit from the new situation. Thus there began simultaneously a movement to smash unions on the part of the employers and a movement to strike for more power and higher wages on the part of the employees.

Reaction was still rampant, the oppressive war laws being still in operation. In reply there was a surge of revolutionary activity,

"outlaw strikes," spontaneous uprisings in unorganized industries, secret activities of extreme political radicals.

In the new Congress London was again the lone Socialist. The conditions surrounding him were different from those he had encountered when he first entered Congress in 1915. He also was different. On the former occasion the atmosphere in Washington was more or less liberal, more or less tolerant. In the White House sat an interesting man who had done battle in the war against the powers of oppression and had championed the New Freedom. The Speaker's chair was occupied by a decent, fair-minded, liberal gentleman. London came into the House a stranger from the strange East Side. He was something of a curiosity when he first appeared there. Some preferred to ridicule him, some to ignore or disdain him. But when he made his bow and proved himself the mental and moral equal of his colleagues they made him feel at home. Even later when he became obnoxious to stand-patters because of his radical stand on the war he was still treated fairly by most of his colleagues. His associates had known him for the honest, courageous gentleman that he was, devoted to his labors and sincere in his attention to his task. Even when the war madness had reached its height London spoke his mind unrestrainedly and for the most part he was listened to respectfully, and at times even with admiration.

The new House was different. Different, too, was the Washington atmosphere that London found when he returned in 1921. Militant hostility to foreigners and radicals pervaded the air. Tolerance of dissenters was banished and persecution was substituted in its place. Idealism was a sour joke to that Washington. Four years of jingo propaganda had had its effect. Many of the men who were now in Congress had been selected because of their unreasoning jingoism. They had become so accustomed to repeating the phrases of chauvinism that they kept on doing it and acted up to their words.

But if Congress had changed, if its attitude towards radicals

had grown more hostile, London's labors on the floor showed no such effects. He took up his task at the point where he had left off when he made his last speech at the close of his second term. He came forward to do battle for liberty and justice, to fight for the rights of the oppressed minorities and persecuted dissenters, to demand protection for the victims of industrial disturbances. His voice now was even firmer than before. He spoke with more authority and more conviction. He returned to Congress equipped with a better knowledge of national affairs, with a deeper understanding of domestic problems. The vacation that had been forced on him had not been spent in leisure nor in material pursuits. The habit of closely following political and industrial events, of omnivorous reading, which he had formed during the two terms in Congress, had become second nature with him. He not only observed events but thought and brooded over them, seeking their hidden meaning, then holding them up and scrutinizing them in the inner light of a Socialist philosophy.

How London felt about this Congress and his relations to it he told in a report to the national convention of the Socialist Party in Detroit, June, 1921, after Congress had been in session a few months. He wrote:

> It is unfortunate that a political party with nearly a million votes should have but one representative in Congress. It is utterly impossible for one man at this time, when everything in the world, including the Socialist movement, is in a state of flux, adequately to fulfill the mission of a representative.
>
> The 64th Congress, the first Congress of my service, was disturbed by the shadow of the European war, the 65th Congress was a war Congress, this Congress is confronted with and confused by all the pre-war problems which have become more complex and more distressing. The reaction is not as noisy as it was some time ago but it is not a bit less dangerous. It is now organized. It seeks to annihilate every one who has a change to suggest. It detests bitterly the most extreme Communists who are carried away by the

> glamour of distant revolution. It would suppress the Socialists who lay their emphasis on education and on the enlightenment of the masses. It would stifle the Non-Partisan League, crush the Farmer Labor Party and would lay its cruel hand not only on the I.W.W. but on the most conservative union of the A. F. of L.
>
> This is a business man's Congress and it is ultra-conservative. It is hard for a Socialist not to become cynical or indifferent to his past in the present atmosphere. Conscious, however, of the fact that, limited as opportunities are, I must not permit myself to become despondent, I have stuck to my work. I wish I could report some substantial accomplishment, but in a sense I am in the same situation in which the Party finds itself with the onslaught made upon us by the powers of darkness. It is a miracle that we are alive.

A few days after Congress convened in a special session, London introduced his first resolution, asking Congress to recommend to the President a general amnesty for political prisoners. With the introduction of this resolution London entered upon an unremitting campaign for the liberation of the men and women who had fallen afoul of the Espionage Law. He spoke in their behalf whenever opportunity presented itself. He argued and pleaded, he called to his aid examples from history and from practices of other countries. At first the only response his appeal evoked were jeers and venomous questions from opponents, but gradually sentiment began to veer in his direction. Some of his telling arguments were greeted with considerable applause and other marks of approval. In the course of time some few of his colleagues were moved sufficiently to join him in the fight that he had carried on for over a year.

His first long address on the subject was delivered on July 1. He began by calling the attention of the House to the extended effort that had been made in the course of the previous year to prevail upon the former President to grant amnesty to political prisoners. He told of the plea made by a delegation of the Socialist Party and the American Federation of Labor. Mr. Gompers had led his delegation twice before two Presidents.

When he appeared a second time before President Harding, "Mr. Gompers dwelt at length upon the valuable service rendered by organized labor during the trying days of the war and in the name of the millions of organized workers urged that the nation be generous and that the severity of war legislation give place to the kindness and love so essential to peace. I was a member of that delegation and delivered a short address."

Then he took up the favorite excuse with which the Presidents had justified their repeated refusals to follow the example of other countries. They argued that in this country there were no political offenders. All laws were civil and criminal and prisoners behind bars were criminal offenders and should be treated as such. This excuse London proved to be specious.

> It has been argued that there is no such thing known to American law as a political offender. That is not so. In our immigration laws and treaties a sharp line of distinction is drawn between crimes involving moral turpitude and offenses of purely political character. You are all familiar with the proclamation of George Washington after the so-called Whiskey Rebellion, the numerous proclamations during the Civil War and during the Reconstruction period. In one of his proclamations Abraham Lincoln, in an attempt to distinguish between ordinary prisoners and political prisoners, used the expression "state prisoners." The phrase "political prisoners" occurs in one of the proclamations of President Roosevelt. In drawing a clear line of demarcation between the political offender and the person guilty of moral depravity in our treaties and immigration laws we always took cognizance of the fact that the political offender was a political dissident who clashed with his government not because of his moral unfitness but solely because of his advocacy of a principle.
>
> From the American standpoint the political protestant was of better human material than the foreign government which persecuted him. That is why our immigration laws made exception in his favor and our extradition treaties refused to extradite him. In favoring the political rebel the American people were conscious of the fact that the European political offender had incurred the hostility of his government because

of his attempt to exercise elementary and inalienable human rights such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, the right of petition and of peaceful assemblage, or because of his endeavor to bring about a form of government under which such rights would not be disputed.

But even if the offenders were ordinary criminals, the abnormal circumstances under which they had been tried and convicted were sufficient grounds for a revision and a revocation of the sentence.

It was humanly impossible for juries or for courts to administer justice without prejudice and partiality. Can you imagine a juror who had a son in the trenches giving calm and dispassionate consideration to the case of a defendant whose alleged seditious speech contained unpopular political or economic doctrines? The cases are too numerous to be given in detail.

The case of Mollie Steimer may serve as an illustration of justice in war time. Mollie was seventeen years old when she became stranded in the United States. After the armistice she distributed circulars protesting against the blockade of Russia. She threw the circulars from the roof of a tenement. The janitor of the building objected to having the sidewalk littered with paper and called the attention of the authorities to the miscreant. The circulars were found to contain strong language—so strong that the government of the United States and its institutions were concluded to have been endangered. She was tried, found guilty and in order to make the "world safe for democracy," sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment. Her sentence was afterwards commuted to three years. She is still in jail.

Take the case of Debs. Debs has been a Socialist and has been preaching international peace for more than twenty-seven years. . . .

The references to Socialism and to Debs provoked a number of interruptions from the Floor. One member wished to know whether London was referring to the "Socialist philosophy or to cowardice and treason." Another asked whether there was any reason why Debs should be accorded better treatment than

other prisoners. After disposing of these questions with biting satire London concluded with a plea on the grounds of humanity and peace.

> The continued imprisonment of men for their adherence to an unpopular theory encourages all sorts of excesses on the part of the unthinking and is a direct influence to mob action. Such a condition is intolerable in a free country. The administration took a forward step when the Postmaster General restored the mailing privileges to a number of Socialist publications, a privilege of which they never should have been deprived. The administration should take the next step and without any prompting by Congress should release and restore to full civic rights the men and women on whose behalf I have spoken. The war is over. Let us forget its cruelties and build anew on the foundation of love. A democracy cannot afford to be revengeful.

On November 22, London fought for an entire day for an opportunity to spread on the pages of the Congressional Record a number of amnesty petitions by prominent writers, publishers, ex-soldiers wearing war decorations, and by an organization of ex-service men counting a membership of over 400,000. His request was rejected. He then introduced his petition piecemeal, reading small parts of the document whenever he obtained the floor to speak on amendments to extraneous bills. To the repeated objections from the floor that London was out of order, that what he was saying was not germane to the subject under discussion, the Speaker replied that "a liberal rule has usually been observed in that regard." London had discovered that liberal rule in the previous term and availed himself of it. He would ask for the privilege to introduce an amendment to a bill under discussion and he would utilize his allotted time to talk on other matters in which he was interested but on which he could not obtain a hearing in the regular manner.

At the end of the year, in 1921, Debs was released from Atlanta together with a number of other prisoners. But there still remained behind Federal bars one hundred and eighteen radicals,

besides the many hundreds in various state prisons. On behalf of these London renewed his fight for amnesty. Shortly after the liberation of Debs he again availed himself of the liberal rule. Rising ostensibly on an amendment to a bill he launched a new plea for amnesty.

> On the 8th of January the President commuted the sentence of a manufacturer who had been found guilty of a violation of the anti-trust act. I am not protesting the commutation of that sentence. I applaud every impulse of humanity which relieves a man in distress. Nor am I revengeful. Nor do I hate the rich. Nor would I like to send them to jail. As a matter of fact I am opposed to the so-called anti-trust legislation. It is a farce. Every time the court ordered the dissolution of a trust the stock of the trust rose in value. It is absurd to punish a man because he has succeeded over his competitor. What I do deplore is that the administration which had found it necessary to reduce a four months' sentence of a rich manufacturer by three months, at the same time keeps in jail the victims of war hysteria, many of whom have been sentenced to ten, fifteen or twenty years for delivering an address, for expressing an opinion, for trying to tell a story or presenting a viewpoint that was unpopular. Is it because their views are considered antagonistic to capital? Is it because they have been preaching the necessity of coöperation among workers? I am protesting against the continued imprisonment of one hundred and eighteen political offenders. They released Debs because the name of Debs attracted millions of men and women. Debs is a great figure; Debs was a candidate for the presidency. But I am as much interested in the plain man who is in jail; in the fellow who distributed the circulars and got himself sent to prison for ten years because some fool of a reactionary judge was anxious to intimidate all dissenters.

London reverted to the subject a few months later when the House was discussing a bill for scrapping some of the battle cruisers outlawed by the Washington conference. He thought that the scrapping of war hatreds was even more important.

> I want to present to the House, now that you are all singing

the praises of those who love peace, the question of amnesty for the men who had the courage to speak their true convictions about war during the war. I want to submit to you the cases of those men and women to whom the love of peace was a life passion, to whom it was a religion, to whom it was the meaning of their existence—the case of men and women who believed that it was their mission to preach peace on earth when men were killing one another.

That London did not put a false estimate on the prejudices that had been responsible for the Espionage Act and the injustice resulting from it is shown by the questions the exponents of the law put to him as he concluded his remarks.

Mr. Johnson of Mississippi—How many political prisoners are there now?

Mr. London—There are now in the Federal jails one hundred and thirteen.

Mr. Andrews of Nebraska—Does the gentleman think those one hundred and thirteen prisoners should be scrapped along with the ships that come under this bill?

Mr. London—I think with the ships you should scrap your hatreds, your passions, your prejudices and bring a human element into our legislation.

Mr. Miller—Why does not the gentleman introduce a bill for some of the other folks to scrap their hatreds?

Mr. London—They have been preaching international love and that has been called a crime. They preached international coöperation when the cowards kept their mouths shut.

Mr. Andrews—Do you think it right for any person when our nation is at war to seek by any means to thwart the government of the United States from winning the war?

Mr. London—The doctrine that during war all lips must be sealed lies at the basis of monarchical institutions. There is nothing more dangerous than the theory that a mere declaration of war deprives one of the right to criticize. That is how monarchies came to be established.

Mr. Miller—Is the gentleman undertaking to defend the principles of Trotzky and Lenin in the Congress of the United States?

Mr. London—The question is too absurd to require an answer.

Mr. Miller—Answer it, then.

Mr. London—The question shows an amazing ignorance. The ideas that I have just expressed were expressed many generations ago by Sumner, Webster and others. Lenin was still unborn and Trotzky's name was unknown. This form of insinuation appeals only to the very ignorant and has no place here. It might have worked three years ago. Even war should not be permitted to destroy the essence of a democratic form of government. Even during war the people are the principals and the government the agents. There can be no people's rule when the people are not allowed to speak their minds.

Mr. Andrews—Can the gentleman cite any government that has practised more cruelty than Lenin and Trotzky?

Mr. London—What in the world has that got to do with it? If it is true, does the gentleman want to imitate them?

Persistent hammering at the jail doors by London in Congress and by organized radicals and liberals outside finally began to show results. Fifty-one members of the House of Representatives filed a petition asking the President to grant amnesty to all political offenders. This petition did not go unchallenged by the jingoes. One of them denounced it on the floor of the House as a piece of Bolshevism, Socialism and anarchism. To this attack London made the rejoinder, "I am astonished that a gentleman of his ability should resort to cheap and vulgar methods instead of employing arguments." And he drew a picture of the lofty character of the men held in confinement, for whose liberty he was pleading. "Many of them are so firmly convinced of the justice of their principles that they refuse to sign a petition for clemency. They say that they have committed no crimes, that they have no hatred in their hearts and that they would rather rot in jail than petition for mercy. I think men that are capable of such martyrdom deserve respect. Every man owes it to himself to search his own soul and find whether he did his duty during the great crisis that confronted mankind during the war."

To his former argument that the offenders have a right to their views, that the Espionage Law was against the spirit of

America and of the Constitution and that the judges and juries had been unfit psychologically to return fair and unbiased verdicts, London now added a new charge, calculated to prove extenuating circumstances. He argued that at the time the prisoners committed their offenses the war had not been taken seriously. Nobody, not even Congressmen, had looked upon the situation as serious.

> Gentlemen should not forget that even in this Congress the war was not taken seriously until the beginning of 1918. I recall that in this very Congress a conservative member made a motion that the enlisted men should not be called upon to serve abroad until an opportunity was given to them to volunteer. And this fool motion received 115 or 117 votes in the House. A speech delivered along these lines outside of Congress would have exposed the man who delivered it to conviction and imprisonment under the Federal statute.

All these speeches taken together constitute an exhaustive brief from all angles, an analysis of the law under which the men were convicted, a discussion of the true motives of the offenders, and an insight into the psychological fitness of the juries and judges who sentenced them. London pleaded as a lawyer, as a statesman, as a psychologist, as a historian and as a moralist, and he proved his case to the gratification of the liberal-minded and the mortification of the benighted.

CHAPTER XXXI

Immigration Restrictions

One of the first measures introduced into Congress and rushed through its committee was a bill to restrict immigration. It was obvious from the moment action on the bill started that the new administration was bent on hurrying it through in record time. The restrictive law was frankly aimed at immigrants coming from Eastern and Southern Europe—a law conceived of race prejudice and born of reaction. The restrictionists spread the alarm that an overwhelming flood of immigrants from backward countries was on the verge of inundating our shores, and that this flood would bring in its wake "contagion, disease, criminals and revolutionists." The people were warned that scores of typhus cases from fever-stricken regions of southern Europe had already been discovered, that it was a well-known fact that a large part of the revolutionary doctrines spread in this country within the last few months had come "from foreign agitators."

The old arguments that the foreigners were lowering the standard of living, did not become assimilated, and were deficient in the spirit of patriotism, were eagerly listened to, for the war had rendered the minds of the masses susceptible to national prejudices and race hatreds. In the discussion of the restriction bill on the floor of Congress all these alarms and prejudices and race bigotry were brought forward. It was the order of the day, the spirit of the time.

London, as well as a few others who opposed the bill, knew that the cards had been stacked against them. Still they did their duty by their convictions to the last moment. London spoke

against the bill twice, each time coming into collision with the champions of the measure.

In a short five-minute talk on the first day London denounced the bill as an emanation of narrow nationalism engendered by the war.

> The world is still crazy. The war is not over. After preaching for thousands of years the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and then engaging for five years in slaughter, it is but natural that we should be in an abnormal state. While the killing of men's bodies was stopped, the poisoning of minds had just begun. This bill is a continuation of the war upon humanity. It is an assertion of that exaggerated nationalism which never appeals to reason and which has for its main source the self-conceit of accumulated prejudice. At whom are you striking in this bill? At the very people whom a short while ago you announced you were going to emancipate. We sent 2,000,000 men abroad to make the world safe for democracy, to liberate these very people. Now you shut the doors on them. Yes, so far you have made the world safe for hypocrisy.

He then directed his attention to the two leading arguments of the proponents of the bill: first, that restriction was necessary as a protection against the invasion of radical ideas; secondly, that the immigrants did harm to the industrial life of the country. The first he disposed of as a mere absurdity.

> The supporters of the bill claim that the law will keep out radicals. The idea that by restricting immigration you will prevent the influx of radical thought is altogether untenable. You cannot confine an idea behind prison bars; you cannot exclude it by the most drastic legislation. The field of thought recognizes no barrier. The fact that there was almost no immigration during the war did not prevent us from importing every abominable idea from Europe. We brought over the idea of deportation of radicals from France —from the France of the Bourbons. We imported the idea of censorship of the press and the passport system from Russia—from the Russia of Nicholas the Second. We have imported the idea of universal military service from Germany

> —the Germany of the Kaiser. Ideas can neither be shut in nor shut out. There is only one way of contending with an idea and that is the old and safe American rule of free and untrammeled discussion. Every attempt to prove any other method has always been disastrous.

Against the second argument London offered facts familiar to every thinking and observant man, facts that prove that with the tide of immigration have always come industrial development and growth, and that those parts of the country that had forged ahead materially and in every other way had received the largest number of immigrants.

> To prevent immigration means to cripple the United States. Our most developed industrial states are those which have had the largest immigration. Our most backward states industrially and in the point of literacy are those which have had no immigration to speak of. The extraordinary and unprecedented growth of the United States is as much the cause as the effect of immigration. Defenders of this bill thoughtlessly repeat the exploded theory that there have been two periods of immigration, the "good" period which the chairman of the committee fixes up to the year of 1900 and the "bad" period since. The strange thing about this is that at no time in history has any country made such rapid progress in industry, in science and in the sphere of social legislation as this country has shown since 1900. The new immigration is neither different nor worse. Besides that, identically the same arguments were used against the old immigration.

But even more important than the mooted and long disputed problem of the industrial contribution of some immigrants and the political fitness of others was the transcendent question of humanity, of justice to all mankind.

> Every American problem is a problem of humanity. I am opposed to the bill because it will keep out political rebels. I repeat, this is an attack upon civilization. Progress is by no means a continued, uninterrupted process. Many a civilization has been destroyed in the tortuous course of history.

> It is just possible that unless strong men who love liberty will everywhere assert themselves the world will revert to a state of savagery. Just now we hear nothing but hatred, nothing but the ravings of the exaggerated "I." "I am the best stock, I do not want to be contaminated, I have produced the greatest literature, my intellect is the biggest, my heart the noblest." This is repeated in every parliament, in every country, by every fool all over the world.

As a last resort London endeavored to keep the doors of America open as an asylum of persecuted minorities, and proposed an amendment to that effect. But to defend this oldest of American traditions he found even more difficult than to combat the newest of war prejudices. London belonged to one of the minority nationalities that were then being victimized all over Eastern Europe as the scapegoat for all the ills and crimes and sins with which those countries were afflicted. The Jews were blamed for the Bolshevik revolution and for all the unpopular acts committed by the Soviet government. These accusations had been originally invented by the Czarists, who hoped thus to incite the ignorant peasants of Russia into counter-revolution. But while they failed of their mark in Russia they found ready ears in civilized lands. Thus was created one of the most tragi-comic situations in the long bloody drama of the Jewish people—while the Bolshevik revolution was working havoc with the Jewish population of Russia, destroying the sources of their economic life and hurling them into an abyss of despair, their co-religionists all over the world were asked to explain how the handful of Jews in that vast country had managed to appropriate everything to themselves and what disposition they contemplated making of their enormous natural resources and accumulated wealth. In the face of such widespread accusations against the Jews of Russia it was vain to ask special favors for them on the grounds of persecution and discrimination.

When London rose to defend his amendment he first sought to contradict the lies about the dominant place the Jews were occupying in the Soviet régime.

> This talk about the people of a particular faith controlling the government which is at present unpopular is bigotry, stupidity and absolutely inexcusable in a parliament of free people. Just now the government of Russia happens to be unpopular. Of course adherents of the old régime will insist that seventy-five per cent of the government are of the faith whose followers suffered most from Czarism, the Jewish people, the martyred people of history, a small group, a minority everywhere, who are trying to live their spiritual life in their own way, who have been and still are the victims of religious persecution in many lands.

London knew that the immigration bill was to a large extent directed against the Jewish immigrants from the countries of Eastern Europe. He knew that the forces behind the bill were seeking ways of making Jewish immigration almost impossible. The plea for more leniency which he was making was intended as an antidote against the poison of race prejudice that was being spread all over the country.

> The point I desire to call attention to is this. In every country in the world minorities suffer most when things are unbalanced. And that is the condition in many countries today. The state of civilization of a country can be measured by the degree of tolerance, the degree of kindness with which the minority is treated. When things are upset the mob strikes at the minority. With the world in confusion it is the minority, whether it be religious, racial or social, that is always the victim. Please do not propose anything that will weaken the effect of the provision calculated to protect religious dissentients.

The fight was lost. London's plea was too old for some and too new for others. The old American tradition of political asylum and racial and religious tolerance was out of date and the new ideas of internationalism and the brotherhood of man were still in the future, where only the few blessed with a long vision could espy them.

CHAPTER XXXII

Increased Armaments

In spite of the pledge that victory for the Allies would bring everlasting peace and destroy all fears of future wars, the leading spirits in Congress and in the administration were now calling for larger appropriations to build new warships. The same elements that had only recently called the war a crusade against militarism were now endeavoring to make the United States the greatest militaristic nation in the world. Was it betrayal or hypocrisy? As far as the public was concerned, it was both. The people were betrayed into sending 120,000 of the flower of their youth to death. But this accusation could hardly be made against most of the statesmen and lawmakers who were responsible for these contradictions. They knew not what they were doing, they were helpless in the grip of social and material forces by which they were impelled.

In attacking the Naval Appropriation Bill that came before the House almost as soon as it got down to business, London pointed to the source of the evil. He ridiculed the idea of America being in danger of attack. "With all of its overwhelming power the British fleet could not take possession of a single German port. And with all the preponderance over the Russian fleet the German fleet could not take possession of a single city on the Baltic coast. The United States need fear no other nation or people. Nor can any European people seriously fear the United States." The purpose of increased armaments must be other than mere defence. What is it? How can we decide upon the size of our fleet unless we know beforehand just what we intend it for?

> What we need is the adoption and proclamation of a policy. Do we intend to fight for markets abroad? Do we intend to fight with England or France or Italy for the possession of colonies in Africa? If we do, then we will have to have big enough navies to sink the rest of the navies of the world. But if our policy is to lead by example, to help develop stronger men and women in the United States, to help perpetuate the ideals of liberty, we need no big navies. All we need is to live up to the high ideals which have given birth to America, and America will be an irresistible force for good for all time.

In a second speech on the subject a few days later London struck an even higher ethical note.

> We have a Sunday code and a weekday code. On Sunday we listen to the Sermon on the Mount, on weekdays we perpetrate every crime in the calendar. This is certainly true of nations. We preach good and practice evil. We clothe the wolf of our action in the sheep's clothing of our beautiful phrases. And this will go on as long as the people will allow themselves to be deceived.

And London here returned to the theme of his lasting faith in educated humanity. The only power that will stay the bloody hand of the statesman and militarist is the voice of the people, if and when the people finds its voice in education and enlightenment.

> The question that presents itself to the world today is not how we can bring about a nobler civilization but how to bring about a more intelligent relationship between man and man. I deny that we have any nobler men than existed thousands of years ago. I deny that a single ethical concept has been added to the ethical code of the world during the last three or four thousand years or that the individual intellect of today is greater than the individual intellect of thousands of years ago. What is the difference between the present and the past? The only difference lies in the larger number of those who are intelligent, of those who have access to knowledge. It is all a question of knowledge. And just as it is true that physical warfare has been eliminated between

> individuals in civilized society, just so can war be eliminated between nations, if a knowledge of the causes of national conflict is the common heritage of the people, if there is democracy in international relations, if nations will stop lying about each other.

The real powers driving the nations to arms are industrial competition and a race for markets. The war has not put an end to industrial warfare. It has only rearranged the pawns on the chess-board. It is, therefore, idle to talk of disarmament under present conditions. The governments of today may make pledges and avowals of peace but they will never disarm. As long as nations compete for trade the danger of war will be ever present and the call for armaments will not be silenced for a moment. Therefore the hope of today is the martyr, the fanatical idealist, if you please, who is willing to defy the mighty power of organized society in obedience to the dictates of his conscience.

> The only way disarmament will be accomplished will be when the men who are called upon to die at the behest of statesmen will go to jail for opposing war and will refuse to manufacture munitions of war. Statesmen will continue to preach international love, will continue invoking the name of the Almighty while preparing for war.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Unemployment

What London had predicted three years before came to pass. Millions of men were thrown out of employment and millions of returning soldiers vainly knocked at the doors of their former employers. When London had besought Congress to anticipate the situation with necessary legislation he was ignored. His resolutions and bills for the creation of committees to study the problem and seek remedies were never given serious consideration and his speeches fell on deaf ears. Even now that the theoretical contingency had changed into a burning reality, Congress was reluctant to admit its existence. It again devolved upon London to raise his voice on behalf of the destitute millions, to plan for their aid and to press his plans upon the attention of his colleagues in the House.

Towards the end of May, 1921, London introduced a resolution calling for the creation by both branches of Congress of a joint Commission on Unemployment. He outlined the task that this commission was to undertake—an exhaustive investigation of conditions and a thorough study of various methods of relief, the commission to report back not later than ninety days.

But even before he introduced this resolution London found occasion to take Congress to task for its indifference to the fate of the jobless. He made a scientific analysis of the chief causes of unemployment, stressing the point that it was a social evil, an industrial disease, which only the social organism can treat and cure. "What I complain of is that the two old political parties have failed to take up that question," he said. This callousness on the part of Congress aroused his indignation. "We

do not know even approximately the number of unemployed. I have seen it estimated all the way from three million to five million. To think that there is no clearing house of information on the subject, to think that with the gigantic industries that we have built up and with the expensive governmental machinery which we maintain, we are not in a position at a moment's notice to know the exact number of unemployed in the country! If there are four millions of them it means that one-seventh of the breadwinners of the United States are out of employment today. You realize what unemployment means? It means the reduction of all standards of life, it is destructive of the independence of men."

When he spoke again on the subject several months had passed. London's resolution was still sleeping peacefully in the Committee on Rules. However, something had happened in the meantime. The President had called a Conference on Unemployment under the chairmanship of Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce. The conference held sessions, called experts, delivered itself of sentiments appropriate for the occasion and duly adjourned. No attempt at substantial relief was made.

London now endeavored to impress the House with the seriousness of the situation. He sought to stir the feelings, to awaken the conscience of the men in the Chamber.

> There is no sadder tragedy than to be unemployed. For society to permit millions of men to be searching in vain for an opportunity to apply their energies to the creation of useful wealth and to deny these millions the opportunity to live is nothing short of crime.
>
> Gentlemen, just take the case of an individual. He is here, he lives, he looks for work, all doors are shut for him. A few days ago we appropriated $50,000 to honor the Unknown Dead. It was a matter of profound sentiment and one cannot quarrel with sentiment. Ten days or two weeks ago a New York paper reported the death of a war hero who had been decorated half a dozen times by the American and Allied governments. His body was taken to the morgue. There was no one to give him a decent burial. A few days after

> the body had been taken to the morgue a local post of the American Legion discovered the fact and interred the body with military honors. . . . A few days ago we had the first case in New York of a death officially reported as due to starvation.

And he reminded Congress that he had warned it of this coming tragedy and had been ignored.

> During the war I asked for the appointment of a commission to study the problem of unemployment. I wanted the country to prepare for the contingency which would come with the demobilization of the army, to prepare for the day when four million men would be brought back from the trenches and the camps who would need employment, when the industries that had adapted themselves to the carrying on of war activities would necessarily collapse. But I was the only one who urged that.
>
> I happen to be a Socialist and the voice of a Socialist is a voice in the wilderness. What I said was true; all my arguments were based upon incontrovertible facts and everything that has occurred since has justified my warning. In this Congress we do not hear a word about unemployment.

If London imagined for one moment that this reminder of their delinquency in the past and criticism for negligence in the present would shame the Representatives into penitence, he was quickly disillusioned. Even before he had brought his appeal to a close, one gentleman began clamoring for permission to ask a question. He wished to know if the situation could not be improved by "readjustment of prices," meaning by that, voluntary reduction of wages on the part of the unions.

London answered calmly without losing his temper, "This question is based upon a wrong assumption that wages are too high. In connection with this I commend to the gentleman an article in the American Economic Review and the reading of an address by Irving Fisher. From these two articles the gentleman will see that despite an increase in money wages during the last decade the worker is behind so far as real wages are concerned.

By real wages I mean the purchasing power of the worker's earnings."

It was probably this question, however, that made London realize how remote this most pressing problem was from the minds of his colleagues and he closed with the same plea he had made months earlier when the question was still new. No progress had been made since. The first step had not yet been taken. So again London besought Congress to realize the importance of the situation, at least to understand that such a problem existed, "I am suggesting no panacea. I do not claim to be the source of all wisdom. I ask you to help solve the problem. I protest against the indifference of Congress. I have suggested remedies in my previous addresses and resolutions dealing with the subject. Have you anything better to offer? Come out with it."

The third extended address that London delivered on the subject of unemployment was compounded of wrath and sarcasm and directed at the two old parties and at individual members of Congress. It was delivered in February, 1922, when Congress had been in session nearly a year without lifting a finger to aid the millions who walked the streets and begged for a chance to earn a living. All of London's pleading and urging and exhorting had been in vain. He now told Congress what he thought was the reason for its heartlessness. The parties which elected its members were political organizations in name only—they were without consistent principles or policies. And, what is more, the people knew it.

> It seems that the American people do not vote for a party, they vote against a party. They voted against Democrats and elected the Republicans, and the Republicans have a fat majority—fat, thick, dull. So fat that there is no evidence of muscle anywhere—it is all flabbiness. You do not find any action; you do not find any definite program.

The two big political parties believe in the past, repeating the shibboleths of scores of years ago although changed conditions

have rendered those ideas meaningless. The men those parties picked as their representatives—they too are not fit to comprehend the problems that are so vital to the great mass of the workers.

> It is a pity that we have not on the floor fifteen men who can speak in the name of the workers, who can speak in the name of organized labor. I have no quarrel with the personnel of Congress. The majority of the members of this House are self-made men who have risen out of poverty through their own efforts. The conditions which have enabled them to do that no longer exist. They believe that all can help themselves the same way—that is not true. The men who are here and who have by individual effort succeeded in rising are the chosen few.

But while London understood the psychology of his colleagues he refused to exonerate them.

> Your very intelligence, your very ability, your very gifts impose upon you the duty of taking up the cause of the many. I am sorry that we have not here a larger number of men who understand the interests of the masses from personal knowledge, from knowledge of today. The workers have no voice here, no one represents them. I cannot adequately represent them single-handed, I am too much of a philosopher. What you need here is some fellow who would make himself a nuisance, a disturber, not only one—but many who would wake you up.

Nor did he spare the workers who permit themselves to be without effective representation in Congress.

> Of course you are not altogether to blame. The workers are to blame—the great industrial masses. Toothpick Makers' Union No. 675 is primarily interested in Toothpick Makers' Union No. 675 and does not care for the rest of the world. The workers do not study, do not organize, do not prepare for the future. They make no demand upon Congress.

A few days after the delivery of this speech London realized the futility of his efforts when the Appropriation Bill was pre-

sented to the House. In it was an item to appropriate the sum of $225,000 for the Secretary of Labor "to foster, promote and develop the welfare of the wage earners of the United States, to improve their working conditions, to advance their opportunities for profitable employment."

The paltry sum of $225,000 to look after the welfare of all the wage earners! The first on the list presumably would be the several millions of unemployed. London asked for only a few minutes to express his reaction to this request. "I don't know whether it is humor, irony or sarcasm," he cried out. "What are the Republican administrators thinking of? Are they deaf or blind? Do they not know what is going on? Can an appropriation which might have been sufficient ten or twelve years ago be adequate today in view of the emergency which confronts the country?"

CHAPTER XXXIV

The American War Aims

The long struggle in Congress over the peace treaty came to a vague end, with a resolution introduced by the administration in June, 1921, declaring the war at an end. What the resolution pronounced in official language under an official seal had been a fact for over two and a half years. Everything else—the attitude of this country towards the treaty of Versailles, the many international differences born of the war to which the United States was a party—was left hanging in the air. It seemed that nobody at the helm knew how to handle these problems, and that nobody cared. In the final debate over the peace resolution London spoke the mind and sentiments of the millions who had been disappointed in the crusade upon which the former President had sent the flower of the country. These disappointed masses had given vent to their feelings in the election of 1920 when they ousted the Democratic party from every branch of the federal government by staggering majorities. The resentment of the people served also to perplex the new administration which was entrusted with the task of attacking the problems left by the war. It did not know how to do the job. The administration of Harding seemed interested only in favors for the friends of the Ohio gang and in leaving things alone.

There was only one party in the country that had a right to face the people unashamed, unblushingly, the party that had opposed the war and that had fought with all its might for a just peace from the day that the country entered into the fray. And as fate would have it the same voice that proclaimed the ideas of that party at the beginning of the tragedy was there to reiterate them at the close, the voice of Meyer London.

In a few brief sentences London sketched the story of America's connection with the European struggle from the beginning to the end.

> For years we had been told that the European conflict was none of our concern. The Democratic President was elected on the platform "He kept us out of war." The Republican candidate for the presidency never thought of suggesting war. During the war itself all discussion was suppressed. We were continually told that it was a holy war, that all our allies and associated powers were white-robed angels, contending with a satanic force located in the center of Europe. Well, the war is ended. The satanic power was overthrown by his own people, the time came to make peace. Then it became known that conflicting secret treaties had been made, that each of the associated powers wanted a part of the spoils, that the big fellows got everything they wanted, that the little fellows were given little or nothing and were invited to be happy, that cruel and merciless terms were imposed on the defeated people in spite of the frequent assurances that they would be treated with consideration if they overthrew their government.
>
> We found that a so-called League of Nations had been organized, that national and race hatred had become intensified, that the whole of Europe had become Balkanized, that under the guise of mandates colonies and peoples have been transferred to the victorious nations.
>
> Strangely enough in almost every case the mandates went to the nation that had by force obtained possession of the mandated territory during the war. We found that a number of small sovereignties have been created with big appetites for more territory. We found that penalties and indemnities had been exacted from the defeated people which threatened to crush them for generations to come.
>
> No wonder the American people are asking "Where do we come in?" We have no international peace and our national security has not been increased by anything that happened in Versailles. We were told that there would be disarmament, that it was a war to end war, and we see that since the very signing of the armistice, armaments have been increasing and wars have multiplied in number.

And here London could not refrain from reminding the House that the question which the country was asking now, "What was America's aim in the war?" he had asked on the floor of the House two months before the plunge was made. At that time he offered an answer and said "It will have established the right of munition makers to sell munitions." And London admitted facetiously that this one hope he entertained back in 1917 had not materialized. "Even that right had not been established. I voted against war. I am glad I did."

Both parties had been parties to the crime. Both had played the confidence game.

> I want to say that the Republicans are not a bit better. Whatever of disaster may have come out of the war, the blame for it rests as much on the shoulders of the Republicans as upon the Democrats. The President came out with the slogan "Make the world safe for democracy" and every Republican repeated it as if he were a phonograph. It was only when the President came to make peace and there was a possibility of a Democratic President of the United States becoming the President of the first League of Nations and so gaining prestige with the American people, who love success, that the Republicans put up a fight against the President.

But how about the Socialists? True, they opposed the war and were indefatigable in their criticism of the war-mongers. But what can they propose now? Have they anything constructive to offer? One of the Congressmen made that challenge to London. He said, "The gentleman has spoken of the lack of program on the part of the Democrats and Republicans. Will the gentleman enlighten the House as to what the Socialist program is?"

To this challenge London offered a concise statement of the Socialist peace program, a program that had been ignored by all victorious nations, the United States included.

> Our international program would involve first, cancellation of all war debts among all Allied nations. That must be

done in order to establish economic stability. Next, we would revise or wipe out the treaty of Versailles. We would initiate an association of nations based upon democratic principles. We would convoke an international, interparliamentary congress to consist of delegates elected on a democratic basis, to meet and discuss the basic principles of all peace. We would create an international fund out of which credit might be extended in food, raw materials and machinery for the people in need of such aid. We would demand universal disarmament. We would recognize Russia because no peace which refuses to take into consideration a country with a population of 140,000,000, occupying one-half of Europe and one-half of Asia, can be a lasting peace.

How many tears, and how much anguish, how much suffering and degradation would have been spared all the nations of Europe if this Socialist program had been adopted at the proper time! How far would we have advanced by now in the direction of universal peace and abolition of war! But verily in this instance the words of the prophet had their fulfillment, "They that sow the wind, shall reap the whirlwind."

CHAPTER XXXV

The Fordney Tariff

Long and bitter was the fight in Congress over the tariff bill that the Harding administration undertook to introduce soon after it assumed power. Professor William Starr Myers, a Republican historian, characterizes these bills as "the most ill-drawn pieces of legislation in recent political history" and as bills "worked out in the spirit of log-rolling that was anything but edifying to the country." The bills were opposed by the Democrats, the traditional enemies of protection. Their opposition, however, was in the main sectional, although some of their spokesmen on the floor of Congress tried to buttress their position with arguments from the international exigencies created by the war.

Meyer London ranged himself on the side of the opposition denouncing the bill as "the greatest political steal in our history. A more reckless, a more arrogant, a bolder steal has never been attempted in the history of plunder by legislation than this protective tariff bill." But as was his wont in Congressional debate he put the greatest stress on fundamental principles. Protection was a wall built between nations, barring amicable intercourse and casting dark shadows where lurked evil spirits of suspicion and vengeance.

> The world prospers by the free exchange of products. The world gains by permitting things to be produced wherever it can be done most easily. It should be the statesman's task through reciprocity to bring free trade. Tariff obstructions have always been a prolific source of international conflict.

Protective laws are in London's view the essence of the philosophy of plutocracy.

> The protectionist's theory is this: the great masses of the people are stupid anyhow. They do not know their business, they have no money. The fellow who has money is a clever man. The fellow who amasses money shows his intelligence beyond any doubt. Therefore he should be called upon to rule. Now we are going to make the laws. We have the money, we have the government. Let the other fellow keep quiet. We are going to give full play to the trusts. We are going to take care of the worker, we will pay him higher wages, we will take care of him provided he does not give us too much trouble.

What infuriated London was the presumptuousness of the capitalists in presenting their demands in the name of the workers. If the workers wanted protection, let them ask for it

But the workers are not concerned with the tariff. The tariff cannot help them.

> Let us see how this bill affects the things in which the worker is primarily interested. Let us take the budget of the worker's family. What does it consist of? Food requires 20 per cent of the income, rent 20 per cent, clothing 15 per cent, fuel and light 6 per cent, furniture 4½ per cent, and the rest, very little of it, for recreation education, insurance and some for the practice of religion Now how will your bill affect the things which primarily concern the worker? It will not diminish his rent for this bill imposes a tax on every item which goes into the building of homes. As for food, if your promise to the farmer is made good, the price of food will be increased On clothing, on furniture, on books, on everything else you have taken care that there should be pretty high tariff. How can you appeal to the worker?

And here London made this challenge to both parties, who had in the course of the debate professed their devotion to the workingman. He offered a bill to make the levying of duties on imports conditional upon the maintenance of labor standards —no duty should be levied on an article imported from abroad unless the equivalent article was produced here under decent labor conditions, a working day of not more than eight hours,

a working week of not more than forty-four hours, no children under sixteen to be employed, wages and other terms of employment to be determined by collective bargaining.

When he next spoke on the tariff bill he made this proposal his main theme. He called particular attention to the highly protected steel industry which at that time still maintained the twelve-hour shift and the seven-day week for a large portion of its employees.

Moreover that industry was then as now the uncompromising enemy of trade unionism. If there is any truth in the claim of the protectionists that they are concerned with the welfare of labor let them refuse protection to the steel trusts unless the workers are first protected against the tyranny of those trusts.

> With the onslaught which the triumphant swine of plutocracy are now making upon organized labor, the refusal to grant protection to an industry unless it concedes to the toilers the right to organize and to deal collectively would undoubtedly be of aid to the workers. In the steel industry particularly have the workers been unable by their own efforts to improve their conditions. I would rather see the working people obtain the eight-hour day with their own organization by the development of their own solidarity and action than by legislation from the top. I always believe in making progress from the bottom up. But if the law is to do any protecting let it protect the weak against the strong, the masses of the people against the gigantic corporations and trusts.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Military Glory

To oppose an otherwise unanimous House on a question of military glory in those days when the passions of war were still warm required a large measure of moral courage. By doing so London exposed himself to the abuse of the least intelligent and least restrained of his colleagues. But he did not hesitate for a moment. Each time an opportunity of the kind presented itself he defied the entire House and stood his ground unflinchingly, at times even winning the reluctant admiration of one or another of its members.

A clash of this sort occurred one day in August, 1921, when a bill was presented recommending the distribution of war trophies among the several states for exhibition in public places. After the contents of the bill had been read the chairman wished to know if there were any objections to it. Only one voice responded, that of Meyer London: "Mr. Chairman, I am opposed to the bill." Thereupon London was granted the entire hour due to the opposition. He faced a united House and launched upon a vehement attack.

> The bill proposes to distribute to the various states captured trophies. I intend to offer an amendment that the Secretary of War be directed and authorized to sink in the deepest part of the Atlantic Ocean guns, gun carriages, machine guns and so forth. I think that would be the proper culmination of a war carried on by a republic. History is replete with the glorification of war, of war heroes, of soldiers. We have no complete record of the progress of humanity because even profound historians have dwelt too much on war. Entire centuries of human history are blank to us because of the

> emphasis laid upon military affairs. I would have the world begin to forget war. In this, the greatest nation of all nations, this most wonderful experiment in the history of the human race, in this great melting pot of all ages, I would like to see every vestige, every trace, of hatred eliminated, forgotten, removed from the minds of men. Every cannon that we expose to the gaze of children, every military trophy, is an encouragement of war, and a glorification of its deed.

Counter attacks in the parliamentary form of questions came showering upon London from all sides. One Congressman asked whether London would "pull down the statues of the great heroes of the country in war"; another wished to be told what was to be done with all the histories where the records of our wars are written, "Would he burn them?"; and a third queried whether London would have allowed the South to secede in 1861. London answered all these questions; the histories should be rewritten; mementoes of war should be confined to museums; as to the South, "The Socialist movement of the world indorsed the North in the Civil War and sent messages of congratulation to Lincoln. This fact is not generally known. The Socialists supported the North because they looked upon the secession of the South as an attempt to continue slavery and to break up a great republic which the Socialists believed held out a great promise to humanity."

Renewed attacks, more outspoken, followed. "Think for a moment of the message they (the trophies) speak to us; think for a moment of the purchase price they mean to us," shouted a Congressman from New York. "Guaranteeing to us safety of skin, and where were you, Meyer London, all the while?" Another Congressman evoked the spirit of the dead soldiers who fell on the battlefield and demanded, "Where is the Congressman here who is afraid to do his duty?" The last remark was a thinly disguised incitement to violence against London.

The atmosphere of the House must have grown thick with violent threats for we find one of its most reactionary members, Tom L. Blanton of Texas, jumping into the fray to shield Lon-

don. He shouted, "Mr. Chairman, I have no use for Socialists. For ten years I have not permitted a Socialist to speak in my district without answering him before my people. But we men who know Meyer London, know that he is a sincere, honest man, a man of strict integrity and high ideals according to his beliefs, and a student. And while I hate Socialism, and while I fight it and while I keep it down in my district, common justice to man prompts me to say that if all Socialists were like Meyer London they would not be so bad after all."

Mr. Blanton's personal admiration for London must have been great indeed to move him to such a plea, for as he himself explained a little later, his regard for the principles of tolerance when applied to Socialists amounted to less than nothing. He said, "When, during the war, in December, 1917, some of their misguided ones were preaching against young men enlisting in the war and against the prosecution and purpose of the war I went down to my district and used an automobile and I made a speech in every county in the winter time, in cold and freezing weather, and I told every audience in every county that it was all right to be a Socialist in peace time but in war time when there was a Socialist who sought to hinder the purposes of the war the thing they should do was to use the telegraph pole in that district. And then we stopped hearing from them."

After listening to all these sneers and insinuations, London rose calmly and moved an amendment to the bill that "All trophies of war be sent to the bottom of the Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean."

A few days after this commotion London found occasion to hit back at the jingoes. The House was debating a bill to empower the government to exchange military insignia with other nations. The discussion was drawn out over an hour when London obtained the Floor for a few minutes. He said:

> Mr. Chairman—I want to join the opponents of this bill in the useful process of killing time. A good many nonsensical propositions have come before the House. But this is the

most useless and insignificant little bill that has ever taken up our time. Four million are out of employment, the farmers are in distress, the price of food is rising, grave international problems disturb the peace of the world. What is Congress occupying its time with? Little things that do not make the slightest difference to anybody.

So many heroes have risen here, so many men of courage who say they are opposed to war in time of peace and opposed to militarism! The very men who voted for the distribution of trophies are all at once inspired with the desire to oppose everything that would remind one of the use of arms. But let some President come and tell them that it is necessary to conduct another war and I would like to see their courage then. How many of them will dare to face the newspapers that will be advocating war? How many of them will have the courage to oppose the munitions interests and oppose war when the question of war and peace is not a high school debating problem but a problem of life and death to millions?

CHAPTER XXXVII

Tax Legislation

In the fight over the tax bill London again found himself on the side of the Democrats. He was with them in opposing the attempt of Andrew W. Mellon, the multi-millionaire Secretary of the Treasury, to reduce the surtax, the excess profits tax and various other levies calculated to fall on the shoulders of the rich. However, while London voted with the Democrats, he wanted it understood that he was no ally of theirs, for he held both equally responsible for the enormous debt burden left by the war.

> The quarrel between the Republicans and Democrats as to who is responsible for the heavy burden of taxation is amusing. Billions of dollars were wasted during the war. The administration was Democratic. I said some time ago that the Democratic stealing was petty larceny while the grand larceny thieves were the Republicans—the $1 a year men. I hope the Democrats will forgive me this reflection upon their ability. The experience in the last war was that the supplies were abundant but that the stealing was unlimited. One of the worst forms of robbing the government was the furnishing of superfluous supplies. You are paying now for your votes for the war and you will be paying for many years to come. When you voted for the war, you voted to take the lives of American boys and also to waste the earnings of the American people. The responsibility is upon all who voted for the war.

The long speech against Mellon's tax revision bill that London delivered a few days later was a lecture on Socialist thought. He did not discuss the question from the same angle as the other Congressmen, from the standpoint of distributing the burden,

of making it lighter for one group of citizens and heavier for another. At best this was but a superficial remedy, a makeshift. The real solution of the problem was to tax large fortunes out of existence. "Instead of repealing the surtax and the excess profits tax, we should increase them. A tax on land values and an inheritance tax large enough to restore to the people what in truth belongs to them should be adopted as a part of our taxation program."

London viewed the tax question from two standpoints ignored by the Democrats as well as by the Republicans—from the standpoint of plutocracy and of waste. The power of taxation, he said, must be used by the government to rid the country of the growing menace of wealth and to save the resources of the country from destruction at the hands of private ownership.

The concentration of our wealth in the hands of a few is undermining our democracy.

> Democracy cannot live under the rule of these large fortunes. They amuse me, these defenders of plutocracy. They speak of the desire for gold as the only inspiration of the human race. They forget that commercialism in its present sense is comparatively recent. What is known as the industrial revolution is not more than one hundred and fifty years old. We forget that less than one hundred and fifty years ago the commercial class was treated with contempt. Money making in a modern sense is more than mere desire for gold. In the intense industrial struggle which has assumed gigantic proportions and which is frequently international in scope one has to fight to get on top if he does not want to be crushed.

It was shown by the reports of the federal Commission on Industrial Relations that two per cent of the American people own sixty-five per cent of the wealth of the country. These two per cent constitute the plutocracy and they control the greater part of the factories, mines, plants, railroads, banks. They are the ruling class.

But even more important is the other aspect of the problem

of taxation—the reckless waste of the resources of our modern society. London denied any merit whatever to the present capitalist system. He branded as an untruth the claim of its defenders that it promotes progress and civilization.

> The truth is that the commercial classes have not produced a single poet, artist, sculptor, philosopher or scholar of thought. Such inventions as capitalism has stimulated are minor adaptations of great principles enunciated by profound thinkers whom the commercial world has contemptuously treated as worthless dreamers. The money seeker cannot enter the higher realms of human endeavor. He is incapable of taking a national or social view of things. He has no regard for the people; what he is interested in is immediate profit. That is why the profit system is so wasteful of the real wealth of the nation, so destructive of human and natural resources.

And London drew up a list of instances of appalling waste of the resources of the country in the past and present caused by the criminal mismanagement of the ruling classes and of the capitalist system.

> See what they have done with our forests—they have destroyed them. When we come to agriculture, the very mainstay of the life of our nation, we find that we utilize only half of the arable land of the United States. Boasting that we are the greatest in everything, our average yield per acre is less than one-half that of Germany and not much more than one-third that of England. Inadequate use of fertilizers, antiquated farming methods, insufficient utilization of water resources for irrigation, all these things tend to keep down our agricultural output.

This, then, is the paramount question for Congress to consider—how to preserve human and natural resources.

> Let us but learn to think in terms of national welfare and we will save in one year fifty times as much as we can possibly raise by any taxation.

The central theme of this speech is a Socialist criticism of the capitalist order. London was aroused to deliver himself of this indictment by the class character of the tax bill, in which he saw reflected the brutish face of a capitalist order. He could not refrain from hitting out at it.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Property Rights and Human Rights

One day London undertook to enlighten his colleagues upon the real meaning of property rights, one of those terms that grow obscure and more puzzling the more one tries to explain it. London was tempted to do this by a discussion on a measure to control the rapacious landlords in the District of Columbia. This, however, was but the immediate cause. From the contents of the talk it would appear that the question had been agitating London's mind for a long time. Over and over again he had heard Congressmen speak glibly of the sacredness of property rights and denounce Socialism as an attempt to break down the very foundation of civilized society. Over and over again he had heard his colleagues proclaim the slogan of the Republican Party: "No government in business," as if it were a revelation from on high. It would have been quite easy for him to expose these ideas to ridicule, but he chose the more serious and more difficult task of discussing them in the light of philosophy and jurisprudence.

He began his speech on August 23, 1921, was interrupted twice and finally managed to bring his argument to a close the next day. What the members of the House got out of it is hard to tell, but when pieced together and read as a continuous whole the speech is a superb philosophic explanation of property rights, showing its meaning to be quite different from that implied by those who use the term to refute Socialists and other radicals.

> The expression "property rights" is meaningless except to the legal mind. What is a right? A right represents a degree of liberty. A right means the use and opportunity to

> exercise what is in the mind. . . When we speak of property rights or the sacredness of property we really speak of the person who uses the property. Property has no right in itself.

The real problem is something entirely different. Has the government the right to trespass upon the rights that the individual has to enjoy his property? The fact is that the government has been doing it all the time and is constantly extending its sphere of action in that field.

> The law has been steadily invading the domain of private property. Take our insurance corporations. When you study the history of life insurance you will find a veritable cemetery of fraudulently bankrupt companies. The law intervened. . . Today the state writes the contracts for the life insurance companies. They perpetrated so many wrongs that the companies' "right" to make the contract has been taken away from them. . . We have the same principle in the usury law. The state says to the man who desires to use his property that he shall not charge more than a certain rate of interest. He shall not earn more than a certain profit.

All labor legislation, sanitary legislation, legislation on behalf of women and children, seeks to restrain the rights of the owner over his property. And the individuals who are affected by these laws did oppose them on these very grounds.

> Every one of these reforms has been opposed as Socialistic and as subversive to our form of government. Court after court, state after state has been compelled to yield to new conditions. Old principles have received entirely new interpretations. Grudgingly, reluctantly, unwillingly, men are compelled to concede that no one's property can be or should be vested with rights superior to the welfare of the people.

And London concluded by applying the idea of government control over property rights to the problem of civilization. "The problem of civilization today is how to secure the largest possible measure of individual liberty consistent with the welfare of

society." The individual must be made to give up his rights if the welfare of society demands it. And here London turned upon those who condemn Socialism in the name of the individual's rights. He denied that under the present system individual rights exist.

> Our present state of society is characterized as the taking advantage of the weak by the strong, except in so far as the strong are curbed by the collective will of the people, by the assertion of the social principles which it opposes to them.

The individual is helpless without the State. The great question to be decided is this, "Whom should the State serve, whose rights should it safeguard?" The Republicans no less than the Socialists would evoke the power of the State to interfere in the interest of the individual. But there is this difference, "the Republicans are the Socialists of the rich, they are the Socialists of the plutocracy. I am the Socialist for the poor devil."

CHAPTER XXXIX

Government Employees

London felt very much in his element when he took up the cudgels in behalf of government employees who had been neglected during all the years of mounting prices and rising standards, thousands of men and women in government positions still receiving pre-war wages and salaries. The Committee of Labor, of which London was a member, worked out a long measure to reclassify the employees with a view to raising the level of compensation. It also recommended increases in the form of bonuses. When the bill was presented to the House in the middle of November, 1921, London came forward as its champion and the other committeemen were only too glad to have him conduct the battle for them.

It began in the middle of November and lasted about a month. When London first rose to speak on behalf of the bill he did not expect much opposition, nor did he anticipate any complications. Both, however, developed in the course of the debates, to London's great disappointment and greater annoyance. He started by warning the handful of ultra-conservatives not to stand in the way of the bill and he ended in a battle against the entire House, his own committee included.

The temper he was in when he rose to speak the first time was revealed by his opening remark, "Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I hope my support of the bill will not defeat it." He then proceeded to poke fun at one of the speakers for the opposition, "the gentleman from Mississippi, imitating the German statesman Bismarck, left the floor after he had delivered his address. Of course nobody had anything to say. Bismarck got through, and nobody

can question anything after the gentleman from Mississippi has poured out his wisdom."

Before taking up the bill proper London laid down the principle which had served as guide for the committee.

> In industry wages are supposed to be governed by the law of supply and demand. Our professors of economy teach that it is very simple—that law of supply and demand. A large supply of potatoes and potatoes are cheap; a large supply of cabbage and cabbage is cheap; a large supply of labor and labor is cheap. That is the political economy of our colleges. There are jobs and a thousand men ask for them, and you reduce wages to the minimum. But no government can conduct itself as an employer on that ethical basis. No government is worthy of support if it conducts its business on that brutal theory. We must repudiate that heartless, cruel doctrine, that doctrine of the "dismal science," which is no science—the political economy of the conservative. We repudiate that. And so it is not the proper question to ask whether there are men outside of the government service who would be willing because of the presence of five million of unemployed to take the positions of the government employee.

As he proceeded to explain the items of the bill proper he was pounded with questions from the floor, some of the Congressmen honestly seeking information, others endeavoring to obstruct and to contradict. London had to ask for more time again and again. The chairman of the committee gladly granted it to him when the allotted time ran out. He concluded:

> Gentlemen, I am sorry that neither the chairman nor the gentleman from Texas has enough time left for me to go further into the details of the bill. I should have liked particularly to demonstrate that the salaries are not only not excessive but hardly adequate. I do not want you to be misled by the false cry of economy. There is too much of that false economy. We should do the sensible thing. The country is rich enough and big enough and strong enough to increase the budget by three, four or five per cent if that will improve the service and if it will make the

government employee feel that he is getting a square deal and he is not, as in private industry, working under duress.

The bill came up for a final vote in the middle of December. When the items were taken up separately, London discovered jokers that had been hidden from him in the committee. He also found that the committee had made changes in certain items to the disadvantage of groups of employees. London now turned against the committee and against the bill. He fought it for three days running and ended by recording his vote against all the objectionable changes.

In a series of speeches covering the period of three days he expressed many caustic opinions of his colleagues and he was forced to receive a number of hard blows in return. At times feelings ran high on both sides.

> There is very little science about the determination of wages. Wages are not fixed by any scientific rule or any moral code. In industry wages are governed by the merciless law of supply and demand. And in government employment they are decided by politicians and politicians do not follow any rule of reason or of science. Politicians follow only expediency; they make compromises—compromises with common sense, compromises with conscience—provided they accomplish results or think they accomplish results.

Thereupon followed this colloquy:

> Mr. Begg—I agree with the gentleman and I think everybody else does, but I want to ask the gentleman, does he believe that disparity in the purchasing power of the dollar is any worse to the government employees than it is to the employees outside, in industries in your own city?
>
> Mr. London—So far as the outside employee is concerned he deserves all that he is getting. I agree with J. P. Morgan on the subject of the outside employee. When Morgan appeared before the Commission on Industrial Relations just before the war and it was pointed out to him that the head of a family, who was a longshoreman, was getting $9 a week, Morgan said that he was getting all that was coming to him. I agree with him that industrial workers do not

get any more than their politics and sense and their intelligence justify them in getting. They are getting what they are voting for.

Mr. Begg—The gentleman is losing sight of what I am trying to get across.

Mr. London—I know what the gentleman is trying to get across, and I am trying to get something across too. I tell the gentleman that the outside industrial workers are getting what they have voted for. They are getting nothing.

Mr. Begg—You can go right downtown and find the pay rolls of employees there, and they are not getting within 20 per cent of what we are paying for the government service.

Mr. London—If that is the fact that is not any standard to me. I say to the gentleman that the standard of wages in private employment is not determined by any moral or ethical code but by the extent to which the workers' resistance can be destroyed by the employers.

The next day the conflict between London and the committee reached its height, London introducing amendments to the bill for increasing the salaries and the committee introducing amendments to cut salaries. London now accused the committee of acting in bad faith with the government employees, of misleading and defrauding them.

I look upon these hearings at which the employees of the government appeared as possessing almost the sanctity of an agreement. They do not strike against the government, they do not take any form of aggressive collective action against their employer, the government. They appeared before a committee to present their side. They examined the salaries which were offered to them, they passed their judgment, the committee approved, they expressed satisfaction although some protested that the salaries were too small. Now after the committee had reported the bill and after it had been taken up for consideration, for some reason which I do not understand the committee has decided to reduce these salaries by a substantial sum.

The committee yielded to the general cry for a reduction of wages. They feared that the outside industrial world and the outside business world would condemn the action of

> Congress, if Congress would not follow the footsteps of our industrial magnates in taking advantage of the present depression and reduce the earnings of those who are compelled to work for a living. I do not share the fear of the committee on that subject.

And London proceeded to argue from statistics on the rise in the cost of living that the employees were inadequately paid. He appealed to the House in the name of humanity, of justice and finally of efficiency.

> The personal relation between employer and employee does not exist in the government service. There is no feeling of friendship, no intimate knowledge of the individual. There is an absence of the human element. The government as an employer is an abstraction. Unless the worker feels that his livelihood is secured by the government, unless he feels that he is getting a square deal from the government, it cannot inspire him with the desire to render the best service which is necessary in order that the service may be efficient.

The discussion continued the following day. London was again on his feet resisting the committee's amendments to cut increases it had originally recommended. This time, however, the opponents grew impatient and the clashes were frequent and ill-tempered. The first insinuation against him was that he was not fighting for justice but for votes. To this London replied, "So far as the vote is concerned I do not care much for it. The vote of the government employee is usually an intimidated vote. He votes for the party in power. That is one of the reasons I object to low salaries—salaries which destroy manhood, which destroy the faith in the man of his ability to earn a livelihood, which destroy to a large extent his self-respect." He continued, quoting statistics, opinions of experts, calling for fair play and justice. His opponents interrupted him with all sorts of questions and denials until the time for speeches had expired.

When the vote was finally taken London asked for a separate vote on the amendments which reduced the schedules of salaries.

This request was voted down almost unanimously. London then made his last desperate attempt to hold back the final vote by raising the point of no quorum. But the missing members were presently brought in and the bill was passed as the committee willed it.

CHAPTER XL

Maternity Welfare

Some of the short speeches that London delivered in the House brimmed with passion and with wisdom. Particularly was this the case when the subject involved the welfare of the poorer classes. It seemed that when talking in defense of these people his mind and heart were stirred to the utmost, his soul was on fire and his reason keenly alert.

One such speech London delivered on the maternity bill, which called for appropriations to help the several states carry on their work of child welfare. Like most of the measures relating to social and labor reform the bill proposed to give the states but a morsel of the loaf that London wished them to get. But even a morsel is better than nothing at all. London voted for the measure after he had fully pointed out its inadequacy and shortcomings and placed the responsibility for them at the doors of the politicians and certain types of labor reformers.

> The difficulty with this bill is that it is emasculated and its title is misleading. I do not know whether the women reformers want to fool the politicians or whether the politicians are trying to fool the women reformers. It is more likely that everybody is trying to fool everybody else.
>
> There are two classes of women reformers. One is composed of women who are tired of their daily existence. Having attended a horse show and a dog show and a cat show and a diplomatic show, they take up intellectuality. They are very rich and have nothing to do. They follow the latest fashions in the world of social reform. They have enough money to hire good secretaries and they do their studying

by proxy. They collect around themselves all sorts of cranks and are always ready to agitate and be agitated. I have not much use for that class. Fortunately the great majority of women interested in social work are not of that kind.

London did not accuse the opposition of attempting to hinder the progress of science. He suspected an altogether different motive—that they were afraid of the truths which might be revealed to the poor by an honest and disinterested Children's Bureau.

> But I tell you those who oppose this bill are not altogether foolish. There is a point where hygiene comes in contact with social science, and they are afraid of that. What should an honest physician do when he comes to a poor man's family? Instead of prescribing half a dozen powders in unintelligible Latin he should say in nine cases out of ten, "My dear man, medicine is humbug. I cannot give you a prescription. What you need is rest. What you need is better food. What you need is better clothes. Your work is too hard. Conditions in your factory destroy your health. Gather together whatever there is left in you of will and energy and help improve your condition and the condition of the rest of the people."
>
> The Children's Bureau has incurred the hostility of the powerful because it has revealed some of the horrors of our industrial system.

And this brought him to the heart of the subject, the shortcomings of the government measures and the backwardness of the social reformers. He sketched in brief the conclusions of science upon the elementary necessities for raising healthy babies, the food they must have, the clothes, the comfort, the care, the environment. Then he cried out:

> Read this to the directors of the steel trust, the woolen trust. How many workers in our principal industries can supply their children with the things declared by this government publication to be indispensable for normal life and normal growth? What a mockery this advice is to millions of mothers! How little our social reformers are willing to do

> to get to the bottom of things and to help bring about a state of affairs where the head of every family should be able by honest toil to supply all the needs of his family!

It was not simply that the government was careless of the health of the poor; it was not simply that the government was niggardly as far as the welfare of the common people was concerned. Whether consciously or unconsciously the office-holders and beneficiaries of the present order of society dread the spread of knowledge in this direction. For the science of hygiene is bound up closely with social and economic conditions. The mother who is told the truth about the scientific methods of raising a healthy child must at the same time be told that she must improve her economic condition or rather that her present economic condition is sub-normal, sub-human.

> Can you not see how the defenders of accumulated wealth of this country look at these things? They would not mind promoting general rules of hygiene but the trouble is that these rules if made popular will bring the people too close to a study of economic and social conditions and that is something they cannot afford.

Even the name of the bill betrayed the dishonesty and cowardice of the people that sponsored it. It was called the Maternity Bill and was supposed to provide for the care of the mother and infant. "It is nothing of the kind. There is no provision in the bill for anything that could be interpreted as maternity benefits." For maternity benefits mean medical and financial aid to expectant mothers, the aid to be given either as a fund maintained by the government or from funds required by law to be established in the industries employing women.

London charged the politicians backing the bill with deliberate deception. "I can readily see why both male and female politicians should insist that this is a bill for the promotion of the welfare of maternity and infancy. The politicians want people to believe that they kept the promises contained in their national platforms about social welfare and social justice."

But in spite of all this London had no other alternative but to vote in favor of the measure. "Deceptive as the bill is, insufficient as it is, I shall vote for it. If it will not accomplish anything else, it will in a measure help to facilitate the educational work now carried on to a large extent by the Children's Bureau. The work of spreading the knowledge of elementary things is necessary for the preservation and maintenance of life."

CHAPTER XLI

London Demands Government Recognition of Soviet Russia

While the Communists were carrying on propaganda against Meyer London, denouncing him as a "counter revolutionist" and as an enemy of the Soviet government, and while the Third International listed his name among the Socialist "traitors and betrayers," London continued steadfast in his defense of the Soviet government in the House of Representatives. Nor was he daunted by his "patriotic" colleagues who damned him as a Bolshevik and who hurled at his head all the alleged crimes committed by the revolution during the years of foreign invasion and civil war. The attitude towards Russia that London adopted at the outbreak of the revolution he maintained substantially unchanged. He refused to sit in judgment upon a nation of 150,000,000 that was groping its way out of darkness and suffering into the light of civilization. The problem of Russia, as London saw it, consisted of that one thing—to keep it from slipping back into the claws of monarchists and landowners. The Russian people, he knew, did not want the old régime back. They had defended the revolution for four long years, repulsing every invasion and crushing every czarist uprising. But there is a limit to the will power of a nation, even as to that of an individual. It might finally snap under the lash of physical pain, under the gnawing tortures of bodily suffering. And Russia was being cruelly tortured. Russia had been well-nigh crushed under the ruins of the war and the revolution, with no one willing to extend a helping hand to lift her

to her feet. How long would she be able to hold out?

These thoughts were uppermost in London's mind when he introduced his resolution in Congress calling upon the President of the United States to establish friendly relations with the government and people of Russia. Similar resolutions were introduced by others, but whereas the others stressed the motive of commercial and political advantages to us, London stressed the recovery, the safety and the happiness of the Russian people. He based his resolution "on the martyrdom that the Russian people have suffered for nearly seven years of war, blockade and excommunication by other nations, on the principle that the Russian people must be permitted to solve their complex problems without obstruction or interference from outside powers. That Russia must get generous aid and assistance from countries with democratic institutions and democratic experience," and above all on the fact that "the refusal to recognize the present government of Russia encourages professional soldiers, political adventurers and adherents of the czarist régime to foment civil war."

The hostility towards Russia in Congress was so general and so intense that the question of recognition was not even permitted to be considered.

Not even in face of the appalling calamities that befell Russia in 1921, the devastating famine which condemned millions to a most pitiable death, could some of these men forget their hatred. The reports brought by American investigators from the afflicted regions stirred this country to deep pity and the Committee on Foreign Affairs asked Congress to appropriate $20,000,000 for immediate relief. Very few in the House found it in their hearts to oppose this request but some of the leading spirits could not refrain from their usual violent attacks. While agreeing to the appropriation they reminded the Bolsheviki and the entire Russian nation of their worthlessness and disgrace.

To these insults heaped upon a prostrate people London took exception in a short talk on the relief bill. He opened with a rebuke to the Chairman of the powerful Rules Committee.

> Mr. Speaker, I have but five minutes to deal with this vast subject. The Chairman of the Committee on Rules has shown one thing, that he is not made of presidential timber. The President of the United States has presented this very question in his message. He did not attempt to blame the drought upon the existing government of Russia. He contented himself by saying that he did not like the propaganda that the present Russian government is carrying on and that he did not recognize its government.

He then proceeded to say that Russia had not sinned but had been sinned against, that her calamitous condition was not caused by the Bolsheviki, but by the conspiracy of the nations against the Soviet government.

> It was only after the Allies, and particularly the French bondholders, attempted to force a collection of the bonds, it was only after this government together with other Allied powers began to aid the imperialist policy of France, it was only after money and munitions had been supplied by the Allies to every charlatan and every adventurer who was ready to carry on a civil war against the government of Russia, it was only after the blockade, that she was completely wrecked. The Denikins, the Wrangels, the Kolchaks flooded the mines, devastated the wheat fields, destroyed the railroads. These monarchists were all the time being supported by the Allied governments without any authority from Congress and without the consent of the American people.
>
> Our own government conducted war on the Russian people. The appropriation of $20,000,000 to aid the famine-stricken of the Volga regions will be a very poor atonement for the sins we have committed and are committing against the Russian people.

CHAPTER XLII

Justice to the Negro

It is to be doubted if ever since the hectic days following the Civil War had a representative of the American people spoken of the Negro and his problems as humanely and as sincerely as did London in an address before the House on the anti-lynching bill that came up early in 1922. The bill sought to give the Negro a semblance of protection against the crime of mob violence to which he had been exposed ever since the Constitution had guaranteed him at least theoretically absolute equality with his white fellow-citizens. The bill was intended as a sop to the growing number of intelligent men and women of the colored race who were becoming conscious of their political strength in those sections of the country where they were permitted to make use of them. The Republican Party had evidently begun to fear lest these politically aroused Negroes break the spell that had bound them to their party ever since Lincoln gave them their freedom and lest they realize that the Republicans had during all those years been the tacit allies of their Democratic oppressors in the Southern states.

London had only a few minutes to express his view on the bill. He utilized a larger part of his time in pointing out the root of the evil. He drew an indictment against the North and the South, against the master class and the working class.

> I look upon the colored man as my weaker and younger brother. I owe him the duty of defending him. He is in the minority. He did not come to the United States of his own free will. He was brought here by force. We should

> right the wrong of the past, the sins not only of the slave owners of the South but of the slave importers of the North. We owe to the Negro our love because of the martyrdom to which we have subjected him. The illiterate and ignorant white worker does not realize that every time the colored worker is deprived of his political, civic and economic rights a blow is being struck at the entire laboring class. Fortunately the American labor movement is beginning to take a more fraternal attitude towards the colored man.

London discarded the historic cause of Negro persecution in the South for the more organic cause, the ignorance of the masses. The ultimate remedy lies in education and enlightenment, but for the present the government must protect the Negro not by passing special laws but by eradicating violence and mob rule wherever found, against whomever directed.

> I wish the subject were not discussed either as a partisan or as a sectional subject. Particularly since the war, since life has become cheap and since young men of refinement have been taught to bayonet and kill their fellow men, mob violence has spread throughout the country and mob action has become a national curse. It is no longer a sectional problem nor does the colored race alone suffer. Two days ago it was reported that in the state of Louisiana a mob captured a lawyer who came to defend members of the I. W. W. A mob kidnapped and maltreated an officer of the court engaged in the sacred duty of defending a man in distress! As a Socialist, believing that the only salvation of the human race is love guided by intelligence and that the process of human civilization should be obedience to the collective expression of enlightened will, I repudiate every form of mob action.

And in conclusion a single remark on the lynching problem, a remark withering and humiliating to America's pride in its history, its democracy and its nationalism:

> I have often wondered why the United States, this most glorious experiment in the building of nations, has not exercised a deeper influence in stimulating democratic thought

> in other countries. The prediction Thomas Paine made after the American revolution that by the end of the century every country of Europe would become a republic was not realized. The glory of the United States was dimmed by the shadow of slavery up to 1860. Since then the world's view of America has been obstructed by the lyncher and by the leader of the mob.

There is no way of determining the effect this speech had on the Congressional body but the intelligent and public-spirited Negroes of the country were moved by it to expressions of deeply felt gratitude. From the secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People came this letter of thanks: "We are indeed indebted to you for the manly courage you possess in the face of your many foes in speaking your convictions." Even more warm was the tone of a letter that came from Negroes in Los Angeles: "If you had been at the mass meeting of our colored forum where your famous oration or at least parts of it were read, your heart would have jumped with deep delight."

CHAPTER XLIII

A Socialist Law

January 12, 1922, was a happy day for Congressman London and a red-letter day for the Socialists in America. On that day a President of the United States for the first time signed a bill introduced in Congress by a Socialist representative.

The scope of the first Socialist measure to find favor with both branches of Congress and with the Executive of the nation was modest enough. It aimed to afford a small measure of protection for workers whose employers went into bankruptcy. Under the old law claims of wages earned within three months prior to the bankruptcy enjoyed priority, that is, if there were assets left, the employees to whom the wages were due could claim first right to them. But, as London explained, "very few cases of bankruptcies were not the result of deliberate planning. As a rule, the employer about to become bankrupt resorts to a fraudulent concealment of his property. In numerous cases the estates which get into the hands of receivers are entirely insufficient to pay even the administrators. Small employers in particular find it worth while to retain a few weeks' wages." London therefore proposed that when an employer is discharged in bankrupcy he should not be relieved from the debt he owes his employees—money that they either earned in wages during three months prior to the bankruptcy or that they had deposited with the employer as security for the faithful performance of their contract.

When the bill came up for consideration in the House one member wished to be clearly informed as to whether it would mean that "a bankrupt corporation will be unable to secure a

discharge until all the wages of its employees for three months prior to the proceedings were paid." He was assured that this would not be the case. "It does not prevent his discharge, but it means that when he gets his discharge he is not free from the debt he owes his employees. We have cases in large cities, in small establishments, where people, in order to procure employment, have posted with the employer a sum of money that they will remain at the work for a certain length of time. This protects the money in the hands of the employer." Then a second Congressman was worried over something else. "If the corporation in bankruptcy could not be relieved from its obligations to workmen the effect would probably be that the corporation would have to surrender its charter." To put this gentleman at ease the chairman of the Committee advocating the bill explained: "There are very few corporations that go through bankruptcy that continue business under the same name."

This discussion made it clear to the House that the proposed law would hardly affect a corporation, that it was aimed chiefly at the small employers who prey on the most helpless class of employees, who have neither the protection of trade unions nor the strength to reject intolerable conditions imposed by employers. The House then gave this bill its unanimous approval.

How much this small measure of relief meant to the victims of unscrupulous employers can be gathered from a letter received by London two months after his bill had gone into effect. The writer, S. John Block, was an attorney in New York City who had had considerable practice among trade unions and laboring men. Mr. Block found the law good as far as it went, but deplored the fact that it did not go far enough.

He wrote:

> "Dear London:—You accomplished a good deal when you effected the passage of your amendment to the National Bankruptcy Act. But unfortunately the amendment is being circumvented by unscrupulous employers. It covers only those wages that had been earned within three months be-

> fore the date of the commencement of the proceedings in bankruptcy. Within my personal experience there have been three instances in which employers of a large number of men have closed their shops owing substantial sums for wages and have waited three months to elapse before filing a petition in bankruptcy. I hope you will succeed at once to effect a further amendment and strike out the word 'within three months.'"

To this letter London sent the following reply:

> "My dear Block:—When I originally proposed the amendment it provided for a period of six months prior to the commencement of proceedings, but it was utterly impossible to carry it through the committee in that form. The opposition to the entire amendment was very serious."

What a sad commentary on the indifference of the people's representatives to the plight of the least protected amongst their constituents! The employers whom London was trying to reach were on the very border of criminal practices and still London was forced to compromise in their favor when he sought protection for their most helpless victims!

CHAPTER XLIV

London Against the Soldiers' Bonus

It must have been a surprise to many members of the House when London came out boldly against the measure proposing the payment of a bonus to ex-service men. Very few representatives who, like London, hailed from poor districts dared oppose the bill, no matter what they honestly thought of it. London's reasons for opposing the measure were not the same as those of others in the House who opposed it either openly or secretly. They thought that the ex-service men were not entitled to the money. London thought they should get it in a manner more conducive to their welfare. They opposed it to save the money of the tax-payer, London opposed it to save the honor of the veterans. He accused the supporters of the bill of cowardice and hypocrisy.

> Are you for the bonus in your hearts? I know you are not. Do you want to vote for it? No, but you will. Why? Because militarism is in the air! A body of half a million organized soldiers is a political force, and every member of Congress having three or four hundred men organized in his district with no jobs and nothing else to do but to work against him in the next election is in a pretty serious predicament. . . . This hocus-pocus bill and the method of debating it is a combination of the worst kind of political fakerism and parliamentary charlatanism. It is hard to conceive a sadder farce than this debate. Twenty or thirty men have already spoken in the last three hours, each talking a minute or two, speaking in unfinished sentences and incomplete phrases, without expressing a consecutive thought!

London refused to consider the ex-service man as different from

other citizens. If he went to war voluntarily, believing it to be a crusade for high ideals, he does not want compensation. The task performed was its ample reward. "If the man hated the war but as a citizen responded to the call of his country he is a martyr and you cannot discharge your obligation to him by giving him a sum of money."

To offer these martyrs forty dollars in payment of their sacrifices would be to disgrace and humiliate them. There is only one justification in offering money to ex-service men, i. e., to help them materially if they stand in need of such help. But if that be the purpose the money should be handled in an entirely different manner. Instead of distributing it among the men in insignificant sums it should be used to subsidize industrial undertakings which would give the ex-service men an opportunity to work and earn their livings.

> The ex-service man has a right which no one has mentioned during the so-called debate—a right to work, a right to earn a livelihood in the country in obedience to whose laws he offered his life as a sacrifice. Something more than a mere opportunity to tramp the roads in vain search for employment should be accorded to the soldiers returning from the camp and battlefield. One-fourth of the amount which this bill will require, invested in building up of industries, in loans to coöperative societies for workers, in furnishing aid to labor unions, in the building of homes, would have been of infinitely greater service to the war veterans than the doling out of cash gratuities or of insurance certificates such as proposed by the bill.

But this question of furnishing work for the returned soldiers was only a part of the larger problem of unemployment, a problem that had existed prior to the war and would continue to exist long after the war. London reminded the House that as far as he was concerned he had been talking about it before the bonus idea had been born in the minds of its sponsors. The question of unemployment must be solved in the interest of all workers:

> All workers out of employment, whether they be war veterans or not, are entitled to an opportunity to work. Private industries cannot be relied upon to relieve the situation. It is up to the government to help create opportunities for employment.

London knew that many an ex-service man would resent his stand on the bonus bill and many did. But consideration of personal political fortunes never weighed with him in matters of principle and conviction.

CHAPTER XLV

Coal—A Sick Industry

The coal-mining industry probably was hit harder by the post-war deflation than any other. As soon as hostilities ceased the slump began and it grew worse with the passing of time. Thousands of men were thrown out of work and thousands of others had their working days reduced by half or more. The old ills of the industry which had been somewhat mitigated during the prosperous war period now returned in an aggravated form. In vain did the United Mine Workers, the union of the coal miner. raise its voice in behalf of the suffering families of miners. In vain did it call upon Congress and the President in Washington to examine and investigate this ailing industry. In a petition presented to Congress and to the President by 43,000 coal miners in Central Pennsylvania the plight of the men was told in plain language. "Through no fault of their own miners in this district find themselves with nothing to live on through the winter. A year's intermittent employment has left huge numbers of miners with such depleted resources that actual want confronts the families."

The organization made its appeal not only on behalf of the men but on behalf of the entire nation. The contract with the employers was to run out at the end of March, 1922. Judging from the temper of the coal owners and from the general attitude of capital towards labor prevailing at the time, no peaceful renewal of the contract could be hoped for. A strike in the coal industry would inflict hardship on the whole population. Why not anticipate the trouble and take steps to prevent it?

One man did respond to the call of the miners and their representatives. In the middle of January Meyer London introduced a resolution in the House asking that a committee be appointed "to investigate conditions prevailing in the coal-mining industry in the United States." He further asked that this committee pay particular attention "to the condition of the workers and the state of unemployment," and that it "recommend legislation based upon such investigation."

This resolution shared the fate of the appeals of the workers, to which had been added the voice of progressive and radical publications the country over. Things were allowed to drift until the inevitable strike. The bituminous miners, 700,000 strong, laid down their tools on the day the contract term expired. The struggle was on!

The month of April passed and May was ushered in. The employers entrenched themselves for a long battle. They had nothing to fear for the next five months, as long as the warm weather continued. What they lost in regular business they could more than make up by the increase in prices on their stock on hand. They knew that the government and the public would not bestir themselves until the winter cold roused them out of their lethargy, when the shortage of coal would become a painful fact. By that time, the employers hoped, the men would have been starved into submission or driven to surrender by the united armies of strike-breakers, guards and police.

A few other Congressmen, representing mining territory, now joined with London in an effort to shake Congress out of its indifference. Resolutions similar to London's were introduced and at last the question was taken up for discussion on the floor of the House. London spoke twice, on the 2nd and 5th of May. In his first speech he made a thoroughgoing analysis of the coal problem mainly from the point of view of the workers; in the second, he assailed the two old political parties for their callous indifference. Both times attempts were made to trip him up with confusing questions and offensive remarks.

At the outset London indicated the source of the evil in the coal situation as the Socialists see it:

> I wish to point out the utter hopelessness of the situation. There is nothing more illustrative of the anarchy and chaos of individual ownership of public resources. We have probably 10,000 mines and 2,000 owners. They employ 700,000 workers and employ them irregularly. During the last thirty years the average number of days of employment were 214 for the year, so that the public was on strike against the miners more than ninety days each year. When the public is not on strike against the miners, and when the miners are not on strike, the coal operators and the host of parasites are on strike against the whole world.

The men suffer because of the individual ownership which is responsible for the chaotic state of the industry. And London went into a detailed account of the earnings of the coal-diggers:

> There is a great deal of talk about the high wages paid to the miner. Considering the number of days the miner has actually worked, his earning capacity during his best season was not sufficient to maintain a proper standard of living. It was testified by one of the leaders of the miners of Pennsylvania that their average earnings last year did not exceed the sum of $746.

To back up the last statement London cited authoritative figures gathered by the miners' union. The men were not able to make a living. They had not been able to make ends meet for the last thirty years. What was to be done about it?

> The saddest part of the situation is that with the exception of the union's proposition to limit the working week to thirty hours, no suggestion has come from any operator or from any other source for the regularization of employment. The best-intentioned employers shrug their shoulders when confronted with the question. As to the others, the presence of a large number of unemployed is just what they desire. It helps to keep the workers down. It furnishes an ever-ready army of strike-breakers. It increases the difficulties of the union. It supplies ready material for spies and

gunmen. It cheapens labor. One should not expect the enemy of organized labor to come forward with any real cure for irregular employment.

The strike was forced upon the union by the employers in the hope that they might succeed in reducing the organized men to the level of the unorganized. What this level meant London described in a few phrases. "Unable to offer any resistance, not permitted to organize, compelled to buy in the company stores, intimidated, spied upon—the non-union miner has been reduced to the level of a mere living coal-digging machine."

It was a fight against trade unionism and behind the employers were massed "every open-shop element, all plutocratic interests who seek to take advantage of the industrial depression to crush organized labor. Among the largest owners in the bituminous coal fields is the steel trust whose benevolent attitude towards organized labor is by this time generally known."

But if the employers of the country had made the cause of the mining employers their own, the employees had acted likewise. "The intelligent workers throughout the country instinctively feel that the onslaught on the miners is intended as a general attack on organized workers."

It was up to the government to act, and it must do so in the interest of every factor entering into the situation: the industry, the workers, the public. "Should the operators fail to reach an agreement with the miners, the government should declare the mines to be vested with public interest and place them under its control until a permanent policy is determined upon."

In his second speech three days later London took Congress to task for its indifference to what he considered as the burning question of the moment. As he spoke his anger mounted and he lashed at both sides of the House, Republicans and Democrats alike.

What distresses me is the utter lack of intelligence with which supposedly intelligent men treat this question. Here are 435 members of the House of Representatives, legislating

for the common good of 105,000,000 people. The time when legislating consisted in laying down moral principles is gone. All our legislation is industrial in character—we either promote business or interfere with business. The coal question is an economic question—a bread and butter question for the nation. What remedy has been proposed either on the Republican or Democratic side to deal with the coal industry? If you were to-day to begin framing a Constitution of the United States, would you, with the experience you have to-day permit the coal industry to become the property of private individuals? Would you permit an unintelligent, selfish, greedy, petty crowd of money-makers to control the greatest national resources we have?

London was about to go on when Congressman Philip P. Campbell, a reactionary from Kansas, asked, "Would the gentleman rather turn it over to Lenin and Trotzky, than leave it in the United States as it is to-day?"

London's answer and the colloquy that followed must have won for him the admiration and applause of the more intelligent of his colleagues. The Record reads:

Mr. London—I would turn it over to a man with an idea rather than to a fellow whose only thought is to make money. The man with an idea may be wrong, but as long as he is inspired by a desire to serve humanity he will ultimately adopt the right methods; while if he is animated only by the desire to make money nothing but disaster can follow. During the war you established a fuel administration because you did not trust those rascals and you wanted to control them. I refuse to trust them in time of peace.

Mr. Garrett of Tennessee—If a fellow got busy with an idea and did not give us any coal, then what would you do?

Mr. London—If a fellow got busy with an idea and did not give us any coal we would not get anywhere. But the man who has an idea, the man whose mind works, the man who applies himself to solve the problems of to-day in the light of modern principles is bound to get you somewhere.

The interruption over, London continued to chastise both sides of the House separately and collectively:

You Democrats offer no remedy. You content yourself with criticizing the Republicans. You know who they are. You should know that you cannot expect anything from them. The Republican party is a plutocratic soviet. The leaders of it know what they want. The difference between the Republicans and the Democrats is that the Republicans know what they want and the Democrats do not. My position is that you Democrats are incompetent for good and the other fellows are competent for evil. The Republican side is the conscious organized force of the money power to destroy every vestige of democracy in the United States. So far as the Democrats are concerned, they mean well but do not know how to go about it and they are afraid to think.

There is only one remedy for the coal muddle—the Socialist remedy. . . The remedy is national control of the mining industry; the remedy is to bring the bituminous mines which underlie a territory embracing 450 square miles under the control of the collective agency known as the government of the United States.

The same gentleman who a little while before had showed his cleverness by asking about Lenin and Trotzky now tried it again:

Mr. Campbell—They have nationalized their coal mines in Russia. How does the gentleman like the situation there?

Mr. London—What a silly comparison! I do not like to use strong language, but any man who tries to compare these two countries, the United States with 300 years of democratic institutions behind it and unfortunate Russia with 1,000 years of czarism struggling from revolution to revolution towards the light—any man who compares these two is hopeless.

Mr. Campbell—Did we not become the great country to which the gentleman pays a tribute by doing exactly what the people of the United States are doing under the Constitution?

Mr. London—The difficulty with the gentleman from Kansas is that he attributes the glory and greatness of the United States in the past to the fact that he is living today. He does not know what an impediment he is to the future progress of the United States.

The coal question was finally disposed of four and one-half months later when the administration decided to do what London had advised in his resolution at the beginning of the year—to appoint an investigating committee. In order to insure fair examination of the problem London amended the bill, providing that the committee be composed of three groups, one representing labor, one representing capital and one representing the public. Not daring to oppose this suggestion on its merit the opposition tried to have it ruled out on a parliamentary technicality. After a protracted debate over questions of procedure London's amendment was declared in order. This victory, however, was of short duration. When taken to a vote the amendment was lost by a count of 106 to 156. The remainder of the House, 155 members, abstained from voting, unable to decide between the dictates of their conscience and loyalty to their organizations.

CHAPTER XLVI

London Lectures Congress on American History

London read American history neither as an ultra-conservative nor as a rabid radical. The fathers of the country in his view were neither saints nor devils, but human beings subject to the weaknesses of the flesh but also inspired by the dreams of the soul. He refused to revere the past blindly and declined to condemn it summarily. As a Socialist, he never failed to seek for material and economic causes behind institutions and events of the past. And as an idealist he was ever ready to credit the individuals playing leading rôles with a due amount of selfless aspirations and sincerity.

It was this attitude toward American history that stimulated him one day to draw in Congress a scholarly distinction between the two documents that are held by most Americans in equal esteem:

> When the gentleman from Texas speaks of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence in the same breath, he makes a very serious historical error. The Declaration of Independence represents a period of democratic enthusiasm, while the Constitution of 1787 represents a period of reaction, of fear of democracy. The builders of the Constitution sought to establish a form of government which should retain the power of government in the hands of those who own property. The Declaration of Independence was the greatest document in the history of the struggle of mankind for liberty. It proclaims that all men are born free and equal. The framing of the Constitution followed a period of confusion and chaos. It was the result of the efforts of the young democracy to place itself upon its feet. It was a

> very successful effort, it is true, to establish a stable form of government, but it was a departure from the Declaration.

Displeased as London was with restraints upon democratic rule in the Constitution, he spoke of them with understanding. His was not the extreme opinion that the Constitution was conceived in greed and born in treachery. The framers of the Constitution sought a practical solution to difficult problems and the instrument they framed was in their opinion the best suited for the purpose.

But if the Constitution was intended to meet the exigencies of the time when it was framed and adopted it should not be adhered to unless it can do the same thing now. Very few scientific students of government and politics will deny that in this the Constitution fails completely. Many are the Constitutional provisions that have outlived their usefulness and that impede the way to democratic progress both politically and industrially.

These antiquated, clumsy provisions should be removed from the Constitution in order to make it a living organism. How is this to be done? London answered this question in a speech that he delivered in Congress protesting against the action of the Supreme Court in declaring the second Child Labor Law unconstitutional. He based his protest on two grounds: first, because the Supreme Court placed itself above Congress and the Executive; and second, because the nation allowed itself to be shamed by phrases written one hundred and thirty-five years ago.

The people must free themselves from the double restraint placed upon their democracy. To achieve this no violent revolution is necessary. London pointed to a simple remedy: let the Constitution be so amended as to give the people the right to make whatever changes in it they deem desirable.

> The present cumbersome method of changing the Constitution should be replaced by a simple and direct appeal to the people through a referendum, either upon the initiative of Congress or upon the initiative of a part of the people.

> In order to save the country from a general prevalence of contempt for the court, the court must not be put in a position where it will disregard the will of the people; where it will not set itself up against every progressive form, where it will not in the name of the dead past hinder the solution of living problems. Democracy is entitled to its faults, to its mistakes. Democracy exercises its right to be stupid now and then. But democracy prefers to suffer from its own stupidity rather than from that of seven or of nine men.

Simple as this proposition sounds to the average intelligence, it seemed to have missed the minds of a number of London's colleagues who took exception to what he said. One of them asked him whether legislatures nowadays should pay no attention to the Constitution and leave the question of the constitutionality of laws to the courts. A second asked London whether the situation would not be remedied by abolishing the primaries.

What these gentlemen meant to imply was that the people in Congress had no right to wish for laws that were not in strict compliance with the Constitution of 1787. According to their view the remedy lay in further limiting our democracy, in making it still harder for the people to exert their will in the legislative bodies and in the courts. What London thought of this proposal he expressed in his answer to the Congressman who proposed the abolition of the primaries: "Those who advocate the abolition of the direct primaries are advocating the abolition of one of the democratic methods of bringing the government under control of the people."

> Mr. Clark of New York—But the records show that not more than 20 or 30 per cent of the people at most are ever out at the primaries.
>
> Mr. London—The people should take more interest in the primaries. But because only 30 per cent participate in them it does not follow that the question of nominating officials should be left to a clique of half a dozen men in a saloon in the city of New York.

CHAPTER XLVII

Social Insurance

For almost the entire duration of two Congressional sessions there was pending before the House a bill to create an insurance fund for the benefit of injured employees and for the benefit of the dependents of employees killed in the District of Columbia. The committee voted favorably on it and made repeated attempts to have it brought to a vote, but always somebody intervened to prevent it.

Not that the idea embodied in the bill failed to find favor—workmen's compensation had been enacted in nearly all of the states, thus destroying the old prejudice against social insurance. What aroused the opposition to this bill was one particular feature of it which looked rather suspiciously Socialistic. It required the government to take complete charge of compensation insurance and not to permit private insurance companies to compete with it.

When London took the floor in defense of the measure the Socialist baiters were prepared for him. Even before he started on the subject Congressman Ellis fired his first bolt in a rather ambiguous remark. He said "I know he is going to make a Socialist speech and the gentleman (London) is the only man who admits he is a Socialist." London's reply to this was "Whenever anybody refers to a Socialist in my presence it is a compliment, because he must have me in mind."

London confined himself to the Socialistic feature of the bill. He defended it on the ground of principle and of practical business. He argued that private companies had no moral right to profit from the death or the injury of human beings and he proved that private companies could not be trusted to conduct the business honestly and fairly:

> Insurance should never have been a private function or business. It is interesting that when the first insurance case came up in France after the French revolution it was thrown out of court on the ground that it was against public policy, that it was below the dignity of a Frenchman to place a money price upon his life. That was the sentiment of the French revolution—that a Frenchman was too noble a being for his life to be estimated in francs. . . . Death is a certainty, there is no reason in the world why any group of private individuals should benefit by the death of a fellow-man. There is no reason why any profits should be attached to insurance. There is no reason why insurance should be a source of private money making. The early history of life insurance is a history of piracy. The fraudulency of the insurance companies knew no limits. Year after year the legislatures struggled to protect the policy holders from the schemes of the insurance companies, with the result that ultimately in almost every state of the Union the right of making a contract of insurance has been taken away from the insurance companies, and the law now prescribes a standard policy of insurance.

This means that insurance is practically a government business. The government imposes the terms, writes the contract. The one thing we have not taken away from the companies is the right to make and pocket the profits. And London pointed out that the feature of the bill seeking to oust the private companies completely in the matter of workmen's compensation in the District of Columbia would serve as an example for other states and that this was the only reason the insurance companies were fighting it.

> Why do the insurance companies fight the bill? Is it on account of the business involved? No! It is because they do not want the states to take up the subject of insurance. Because, when the states do approach the subject of insurance, it will become clear to every thinking man that this particular field of human endeavor belongs solely to organized society and should not be a field of private exploitation.

And now the old ghost which London had put to rest so

many times before bobbed up again. Congressman Wyant asked: "Is it not true that in almost all lines of business under government control, such business cannot compete with private enterprise?"

London utilized this opportunity to give the House another Socialist lecture:

> Let me tell the gentleman that I know of a company that competes with the Post Office. I will not mention its name. It competes with the United States government in transporting little packages and circulars and such things. How does it do it? While the government pays its men a regular salary with reasonable hours and employs them every day of the year and pays for their vacations and gives them a certain pension, the private company works its men twelve and fourteen hours a day, and pays one-half of the salary that is paid by the government. The Post Office furnishes the cheapest and most reliable method of communication in spite of the fact that we have to pay too much to private companies for transportation.
>
> Take that Socialist institution, the public school. The greatest philosopher of his day, Herbert Spencer—not a fool or an ignoramus, not a man who used the term Socialism as a term of abuse—in his book *The Coming Slavery* argued that the establishment of public schools would enslave society. There is an element of truth in that, because the moulding of the child's mind by a governmental institution may result in establishing a certain uniform and rigid standard. But while there is that germ of truth in it it will be agreed by all that the foundation of democracy is the common school.

And now having shown the connection between the bill under discussion and Socialist principles London draws this conclusion:

> There can be no serious objection to the state fund feature of the bill except the old, old objection, the fear of the extension of the power of the government. Gentlemen, whether you want it or not, it is absolutely true that the problem of to-day is between unrestrained individualism and coöperation. Modern industry is coöperative, at least as far as production is concerned. It is because of the coöper-

ative production that we are coming to have coöperative thinking and coöperative action.

Then of a sudden another ghost confronted London. Congressman Gernerd asked: "Does the gentleman believe in any competition? And is it not true that without competition there is no incentive in life?"

London's answer was a bit of scintillating logic.

> Now let us see about it. I have only two minutes but let me answer the gentleman. The principle of competition and the struggle for the survival of the fittest which some people believe to be the same thing, have been splendidly explained by Alfred Russel Wallace, one of the best students of Darwinism, in a very concise way. He said that the survival of the fittest is supposed to represent the triumph of individualism. In the polar regions the white bear and the black bear are engaged in competition. The white bear, white as snow, has a better chance to approach the victim without being discovered than the black bear. The white bear therefore survives. It does not follow, however, that the white bear is a gentleman. Under competitive conditions where greed and selfishness are rewarded, the meanest scoundrel will survive.

When the bill came up for discussion again six months later the opposition had a measure of their own with the socialistic feature omitted. The fight was now openly against the danger of Socialist ideas, even in so minor a piece of legislation. When London rose to answer these objections he was in a towering rage:

> The claim of those who shout about Socialism ought not to have any effect upon an intelligent man. If you are opposed to every Socialistic measure, you ought to oppose every public school because there is not a more Socialistic institution than the public school. Ten or fifteen years ago the forty-three states of the union which now have legislative compensation had no legislation of that kind. It was then denounced as rank Socialism by every fool whose only argument is to appeal to ignorance and prejudice.

CHAPTER XLVIII

London on the Versailles Treaty

The invasion of the Ruhr by French forces, which was bitterly resented by Great Britain and dreaded by the progressive and pacifist sections of all European peoples, the French included, received almost unanimous approval in this country. Even as late as 1923 when the invasion occurred, the press and public men in America were still singing the songs of war propaganda, repeating the old phrases about German "perfidy" and "cruelty" and shedding bitter tears over French sacrifices and suffering. The invasion of the Ruhr was interpreted in this country not as an act of violence upon a peaceful nation but as a strategic war move.

It devolved upon London, the only man in Congress who was spiritually linked with those forces of Europe who were trying to eradicate the war passions, to record his protest against Poincaré's attempt to strangle Germany. In a short speech London analyzed the Versailles treaty and the action of the Reparations Committee as subversive attempts against the German people. The Ruhr invasion he stigmatized as a fresh blow upon the prostrate body of Germany.

> Germany was mutilated by the terms of the Versailles treaty. Through the loss of all her colonies she was deprived of many sources of raw material so essential to her manufactures. She was stripped of a substantial part of her European population. She was deprived of her merchant fleet. Her organization for commerce with the outside world was battered. She was deprived of a large portion of her iron and coal producing sections. The principal means of communication were put under the control of the Reparations Commission. An alien army, the maintenance of which was

> charged to Germany and which costs Germany more than her entire army and navy cost her annually before the war, was placed upon her soil. The power of the Reparations Commission practically destroyed Germany as a sovereign country. Not content with having divested Germany of a substantial portion of her population, of her territory in Europe, of all her colonies and many of her resources, an indemnity has been imposed which cannot be paid without dooming to serfdom more than one generation of the German people. It is under the pretext of enforcing the collection of this uncollectible indemnity that the invasion of the Ruhr region is undertaken.

To excuse the Ruhr invasion on legal and moral grounds of debt collection might have been possible a century ago when defaulting debtors were thrown into prison or made to suffer physically. We have repudiated that doctrine. People who are unable to pay their debts are no longer treated like criminals.

> The invasion of the Ruhr can have only one meaning and only one real object. It is permanently to strangle German industry, to prevent her industrial and commercial revival and to enable the steel industrialists in France to add to the acquisition of the iron regions of Lorraine the coal regions of Germany.

And London appealed to his colleagues to cease talking in terms of the war days. Men no longer believed in the myth of one blameless nation. What the Socialists argued in war time was now admitted by practically all serious students of history, that it was impossible to convict one side and absolve the other. The peace treaty and the acts flowing from it must therefore be judged by what they contributed towards the recovery of all countries, toward the stabilization of the industrial order and towards the democratization of their political systems. And from this standpoint the invasion of the Ruhr was fraught with disaster. "It is inevitable that the invasion of German territory would lead to a revival of the war spirit. How long can a self-conscious and self-respecting people tolerate military domination?"

The hostile spirit in which London's speech was received by the members manifested itself in the questions hurled at him before he was through speaking. One asked "what the gentleman thinks Germany owes civilization for the ravages it committed from 1914 to 1918?" Another asked, "Is not France within her rights to-day in endeavoring to collect money from Germany?" A third asked, "Suppose the United States carried out the suggestion of the gentleman from New York and France did not see fit to heed her admonitions. What would the gentleman do?"

After due consideration the champions of France in the House concluded that London's speech must not be ignored and one of them asked permission to make a carefully prepared reply. The speaker was Congressman Lineberger of California. What he said on the subject was of little merit. He dwelt on the large figures of Germany's defalcations and France's expenditures on reconstruction, ignoring entirely the points raised by London relating to the moral crimes and political dangers involved in France's act of violence. However, parts of Lineberger's speech are interesting because of the light they throw on the place London had made for himself among his colleagues, even among those who thoroughly disagreed with him. Lineberger said,

"About ten days ago the gentleman from New York, who from time to time has very interesting thoughts on matters affecting the government and politics, arose on the floor of the House to discuss the same situation." In conclusion, Mr. Lineberger told the House something that was even more revealing as to the estimate put on London's opinions and speeches in the House. "In Europe last year I was quite surprised to find that the addresses in Congress of the gentleman from New York, for whom personally the members of this body have nothing but the highest regard, although they differ vitally from him with respect to the theories he advocates, were translated into German and into Russian, and that they were used as propaganda from Berlin to Moscow. I have no doubt but that the address which he recently delivered on the Ruhr will go out ultimately in a similar form."

CHAPTER XLIX

Discrimination Against Aliens

Every attempt on the part of Congress to establish legal discriminations between native and immigrant populations was met with London's strong opposition. These attempts were generally concealed behind a pretense of "law and order" or of "noble reform." London, however, easily penetrated through the veil, dragged the truth out on the floor of the House and there denounced it with the full force of his arguments.

The first bill of the kind proposed the deportation of all non-citizens for violation of the prohibition law. This offense, for which a citizen was penalized with a fine of money or a term in prison, was to be punishable with banishment when committed by an alien. Seldom did London yield to his overwrought temper as he did when he rose to talk against this measure. He began with a blast of fury.

"I wish I could find language adequate to express what I think of the proponents of the bill. Unfortunately the parliamentary situation does not permit it. Parliamentary practice would not permit a member to say to other members that they are hypocrites, fanatics or stupid."

London then told why he thought them fanatics and hypocrites.

> We are continuing the hysterical war legislation. The principle of deportation was brought in during the war to deal with an extraordinary and unprecedented emergency. Now we are going to deport a man because he has taken a drink in violation of the law. Some of you would be deported if you happened to be foreign-born non-citizens. The non-citizen is to be a legal outcast. Let us be honest about it. Why, gentlemen, this proposition merely indicates that the

> mentality of Congress has become exhausted. We have been in session nearly a year. The legislative projects that you were assembled for have been finished and you have nothing to do. But there are some committees that out of their fatigued brains bring forth all sorts of inane, incoherent, monstrous, impossible things for us to contend with. I wish Congress would adjourn.

A much more serious attempt at discrimination against immigrants was made in the Cable bill for the naturalization of women. In the name of equal rights for women it was proposed that when an alien woman became the wife of an American citizen she was to remain an alien subject until she was naturalized according to the legal processes prescribed for immigrants. London knew that behind the innocent front of this measure lurked a grave wrong that would hit many thousands of immigrants who, on account of their lack of formal education, would never be able to pass the literacy test required by the naturalization law. And in the name of these women and their families, he carried on a long but vain fight against it. London challenged not the theory behind the bill, which was sound enough, but its evil effects.

He first called attention to the discriminative features of the law.

> A woman who is an American by birth and who marries a foreigner retains her citizenship unless she renounces it. I would give the same measure of equality to the alien woman who became the wife of an American citizen. I would have her become a citizen unless she declares her desire not to be a citizen. I do not want you to strike at hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of wives of industrial workers by placing new obstacles in the way of their enfranchisement. Nearly sixty per cent of the workers in the basic industries will be adversely affected by this measure.

He was answered by the supporters of the bill, who told him that the measure was introduced in the name of equality and justice for women, an appeal that must surely move a radical and

a Socialist. But London knew better and he told them his position without hesitation.

> This legislation is here primarily because the women want it. It is a piece of political candy that is being given to women. That part of the bill which permits an American woman to retain her citizenship is not the thing I object to. I object to the poisoned candy that you hand out to the millions of poor devils who are taking care of their children and husbands and who are making happy homes.

But what does London want? Since we have the 19th amendment which places women on the same level with men should not the laws governing naturalization be the same for both?

London's answer was a condemnation of the spirit that gave birth to the bill. It was the idea of seeking to debar immigrants from becoming citizens, of making it harder for them to become full-fledged Americans that he was opposed to. This new law was another step in an old direction.

> Qualifying people for the understanding of American institutions should be the continuous task of statesmanship. There are millions of natives who cannot read or write but who are the possessors of a good portion of common sense and of an unerring instinct for the right thing which some professors with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy do not possess. In its present form this bill confers some benefit upon the select few and places at a disadvantage the many. It is a sad departure from the fundamental and wholesome policy of liberal naturalization which is as old as the Republic itself and which has heretofore never been attacked, never been challenged, excepting during the brief frenzy of the Alien and Sedition Laws and during the days of Know-Nothingism. . . It seems that this Congress cannot move excepting backwards.

CHAPTER L

Clashes with Opponents in the House

"The gentleman speaks very often and well, but as my time is limited I cannot yield any further," Congressman Brand once remarked in response to London's repeated interruptions. This was not a mere compliment. London was indeed one of the most versatile men in the House, and one of those most conscientiously devoted to his duties. He was always on the alert, always ready to spring to the defense of the class he represented and the principles he advocated. It was not always easy for him to obtain a hearing. He had to make use of all sorts of parliamentary devices and resort to various subterfuges to get his thought into the Record. But he generally succeeded in the end. He probably spoke on a greater variety of resolutions and bills and displayed a wider knowledge and deeper understanding of problems, domestic and international, than any other member of the House.

One of his most effective methods of brief argumentation was to summon to his support an act of Congress or an event or an opinion that had met with the approval of his opponents and that was still fresh in the minds of his audience. He rose one day to protest against the discharge of a number of employees in the service of the Public Printer, which was done under the pretext of economy. This happened at a time when the recommendations of the Hoover Committee on Unemployment were still before the public. London was quick to connect the two.

> What I would like to suggest to the Public Printer is that he should at least follow the recommendations adopted by the Unemployment Conference which was called by the President. While the Conference did not accomplish much it did recommend to private employers that in reducing their force,

instead of entirely separating men from their jobs, they should divide the work among as many employees as possible.

London seldom missed an opportunity to expose the weaknesses and inconsistencies of his colleagues on questions involving Socialistic theory and practice. Thus he once gave a brief but telling lecture to a Congressman from Mississippi who had always made it his business to hit at Socialism. That gentleman was supporting a bill for government appropriations for the building of roads, including roads in his own district. London reminded him that the measure he was favoring was a piece of Socialism.

> The very able and genial gentleman from Mississippi said that he was opposed to Socialism. That does not prevent him from favoring national appropriations when it will benefit the agricultural elements. The Socialists insist that all our legislation should be guided by the ideal of serving the entire nation, the entire community, society as a whole. The very origin of the word indicates it. Society as a whole must undertake those things which are beyond the capacity of the individual. The gentleman from Mississippi endorses the principle so far as good roads are concerned. Let us be grateful for that.

A more subtle argument for the principle of the class struggle London made in connection with a measure on the composition of the Federal Reserve Board. The farmer bloc was endeavoring so to amend the law as to make it morally binding upon the President to appoint a farmer representative. London added an amendment of his own to make it equally binding upon the President to put a representative of labor upon the Board. In his defense of his motion he admitted that he knew that neither the farmers nor the laborers would benefit from the enactment of the bill. The President could have appointed representatives of these two classes under the old law if he had wished to. He had not done it. Nor would he do it under the amended law. A moral reminder would have no effect. Still there was some sense to the amendment. The farmer would get at least a word if not a reality, and words are not without value.

> While words are intended to be symbols of ideas, the very employment of words very often suggests ideas. Intended to throw sand in the eyes of the farmers, the use of the word "agricultural" may acquire real significance. When the tillers of the soil become conscious of their real rights and interests, the fact that the framers of the law have been compelled to concede that the agricultural interests as such require representation on the personnel of the financial agency of the country, may some day lead the farmers to understand that to be truly represented they must have spokesmen whose interests are identical with theirs.

This amendment calling for a farmer representative was a tacit recognition of the tenet which the Socialists had been preaching—that society was composed of classes struggling against each other for economic supremacy. But if so, why neglect labor? Are not the laboring men just as much a class as the farmers?

> I propose my amendment not because I expect that it will be of more benefit to labor than it will be to the farmer, but solely for the purpose of completing a logical process. If the financial, the commercial, the industrial and the agricultural interests are to be respectively represented, why not labor?

When the Panama Canal Zone bill came up for discussion, London courageously brought up the question of the legitimacy of children born out of wedlock. The bill contained a clause regarding divorce laws in the Canal Zone to the effect that "no divorce shall affect the legitimacy of the children of the marriage except in cases where the marriage shall be declared void on the ground of prior marriage." London wished to know "why the child should be penalized in any case?" The discussion that followed indicated the depth of the gulf between London and his colleagues on questions of conventional morals.

> Mr. Dennison—Oh, that is a question which the gentleman will have to put to the parents. We do not penalize the child.
>
> Mr. London—Oh, yes; you do. You stamp the child as illegitimate.

Mr. Dennison—We do not do it. When a man has a wife living and he marries a second woman, this bill will grant the second woman a divorce.

Mr. London—I understand that. But assume a case when a woman innocently marries a man who is proven to have been married at the same time to somebody else, and their marriage is declared void. Why should the child of that union be stamped as an illegitimate child?

Mr. Dennison—Is not that done everywhere?

Mr. London—No. I am under the impression that where a divorce is given on account of prior marriage, the child does not suffer in most of the states. In any event, it ought not to suffer.

Mr. Dennison—The gentleman will find, I think, that a man cannot have a legitimate child by a woman when he has another living wife and when there has been no divorce.

Mr. Dennison simply could not grasp what London was driving at. The sins of the parents filled his mind to the exclusion of the human rights of the innocent children.

That London felt perfectly at home among his colleagues is evidenced by the bantering he would occasionally indulge in. He would tease his opponents, joke at their expense without provoking their resentment. They knew him to be free from personal malice, and although his jibes sometimes struck deeply, they were always received in the spirit in which they were given—good-naturedly, in a spirit of fun.

An amusing occurrence of the kind was his controversy with the well-known Tom L. Blanton of Texas over an incident involving a military officer at Vancouver. London opposed Blanton in debate. He said,

> I cannot get myself to take him (Blanton) seriously. In his enmity towards organized labor, in his hostility towards every effort of the man at the bottom of society to improve his condition, he becomes absolutely irrational. I have never heard him deliver a logical talk when he refers to the labor question. And since he speaks on the labor question frequently I have great doubts as to his rationality in general.

Fearing lest he had gone too far in his teasing, London added,

"I want what I am saying to be taken good-naturedly. I do not speak with any spirit of bitterness. I have no personal animosity towards any member of the House." Later he came back with another fling at Blanton.

> The difficulty is that some people talk about Democracy without understanding the elements of it. While the gentleman from Texas talks Democracy he votes for a Republican tariff on cattle. I do not know whether he is a bovine Republican or an asinine Democrat.

That Mr. Blanton took these jokes in the spirit in which they were intended was clear from his answer, which consisted partly of an estimate of London. "It is all right for our distinguished friend from New York to be a Socialist if he wants to. I do not agree with him or his doctrines, though I admire him personally. I have just as much friendship for him personally as other men in the House have for him. There is no greater student in the country and no man more sincere than he."

Speaking in opposition to a measure on tax-exempt securities, London thus satirized the three financial geniuses of the Republican administration. "When the gentleman from New York (Mr. Mills), the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. Fordney) and Mr. Mellon announce that they are friends of the people, I feel like examining their pockets to see if they do not contain burglars' tools."

For ready repartee London had few equals in the House. One day London was reprimanding Congress for not returning to the German citizens the property seized here during the war. He denounced the legal quibbles with which the government was justifying its delay and he closed his speech with an attack upon the lawyers who invented those quibbles. "Let me say that to the lawyers who have a lot of legal knowledge but no principles left." A member interrupted with an appeal to the Chair to call order, but before he could go on, London turned on him, "Oh, I am not through yet. I do not know why the gentleman from Illinois should have taken it as a personal reference."

More subtle was his exchange of verbal blows with Congressman Layton over the Shipping Board Appropriation Bill. London was talking against the bill. In the course of the speech he said:

"The gentleman from Delaware (Mr. Layton) who has been so insistent in his condemnation of Socialism does not protest against this kind of Socialism. He seems to take it for granted that it is the duty of Congress to appropriate money so that we may develop an industry for private capital." This exchange of repartee followed:

> Mr. Layton—I do not think you have heard a word as far as my mouth is concerned as to my attitude on this bill.
>
> Mr. London—Then I presume the gentleman's attitude is the same as mine, except that I say what I think on the subject.
>
> Mr. Layton—I would have to go a good way to be with the gentleman, because I am afraid of him generally.
>
> Mr. London—I am not afraid of anybody, not even of the gentleman from Delaware. Nor am I afraid of myself, because I know what I want.

Here is another passage-at-arms in which London made use of his command of satire:

> Mr. Sears—Why does not the gentleman introduce a bill and pass it to correct the evils he complains of?
>
> Mr. London—Well, I have a number of bills that are sleeping quietly in committees without even having the benefit of a cradle to be rocked in.
>
> Mr. Sears—Does not the gentleman know that there are a great many members in Congress who have bills in exactly the same condition?
>
> Mr. London—Oh, I get the point now. The gentleman means to say that the Democrats, being in the minority, are not responsible.
>
> Mr. Sears—No, when they were in power the gentleman represented the Socialist Party.
>
> Mr. London—I represented one four-hundred-and-thirty-fifth so far as the number of members is concerned, although I admit that I represent a larger proportion than that in the

matter of intelligence. But that does not count here. Numerically I represent only one four-hundred-and-thirty-fifth of the members of the House and it is a safe thing to assume that if the Democratic minority cannot get any action, I can't. But the Democrats do not ask for anything. They do not demand anything.

Mr. Sears—I have asked for something.

Mr. London—The gentleman has asked for an appropriation of $1500 for a Post Office in the village of Chippochook.

London's last speech in Congress was entirely in a humorous vein. He satirized the efforts of Congress to reorganize the administrative branch of the government in the interest of economy. He said:

I sent to the library for a book of fables by a famous fabulist. I had read it many years ago and I am not sure I remember the particular fable I have in mind. It is something like this. A mule, a goat, an ape and a bear decided to organize a concert. The mule was the leader of the orchestra. After they had proceeded for some time they all concluded that the music was bad, even for their ears. A motion was made that the orchestra be reorganized and instead of the mule acting as leader, the bear should assume charge. They again held forth, to the distress of all who heard them. The suggestion was then made that instead of sitting in a circle they should form a straight line. Many another change was made but there was neither melody nor harmony. A passing nightingale was called in for advice. The advice was brief and to the point. "Friends, no matter what your seating arrangements may be, you are not fit as musicians."

You have created a commission to reorganize the various branches of the administration with the principal offices at the mercy of the spoils system, with the most important positions being distributed not on the basis of merit but as a reward for political henchmen. How can waste, inefficiency and duplication be avoided? I assume that the meetings of the commission were along the lines of the orchestra I have described.

CHAPTER LI

Meyer London, the Man

What manner of man was Meyer London?

In physical appearance he was of medium height, rather spare, with large gray eyes, a wise, high forehead, a deeply lined face, prominent nose, nervous, capable hands. A quick step, with chest thrown forward, betrayed a large reserve of energy and a spirit of defiance. He was always restless. On the platform he would pace up and down, back and forth; at a conference he would strain and fidget, rise, walk about, sit down. Even at social gatherings he was constantly on the go, pacing about the room restlessly.

Humaneness and sincerity were the dominating traits of his character. He was incapable of acting for effect. He could not disguise his feelings, whether of liking or of dislike. His actions proceeded from humane impulses. He never stopped to calculate, to figure out how a concentrated action would affect his person or his fortunes. The act was performed as soon as the humane urge manifested itself.

His humaneness bore no trace of philanthropy. It was not from pity or from a sense of duty that he gave himself to others; it was instinct. He never remembered himself when confronted with the needs of others or with a call to action.

Yet he had a keen sense for life, for the joy of living. He laughed heartily at the slightest provocation. He loved sociability and conversation, both serious and light. He was an excellent companion and a much sought after guest. At gatherings he was the life of the party.

He was an idealist, not so much from conviction as from an

inner compulsion. He hated injustice and evil not in the abstract but in the concrete. He often regretted his study and practice of law because of the sins of the weaker brethren in the profession. The transgressions of his colleagues would plague him. They made him doubt his own integrity. He would ask himself "Am I really better than they? Am I sufficiently careful of the truth, sufficiently scrupulous? Aren't my fees excessive? Am I doing as much as I should for the people who entrust their fortunes or their person into my hands?"

These traits of character—sincerity, humaneness, love of truth, love of life and men—won for him the devotion, the admiration and the trust of many thousands. In his younger days he was one of the most popular soap-box speakers in his Party. Those were the days when every radical educator on the East Side enjoyed the limelight in the manner of a theatrical celebrity. Every prominent speaker had his worshippers who praised his name above all others. London drew his followers from among the old and the young, the American born and bred and the immigrant from abroad. His oratory was of the kind that warms the heart and makes it glow. He never made his appeal to the baser instincts, never sought to inflame, to incite, never libeled or defamed. Some of his idolizers spoke of him as a prophet. He was not, however, the prophet who denounces and curses, but the prophet who edifies and uplifts. He struck the prophetic note in his perorations, which were fervent prayers for justice and happiness for all mankind.

His intellectual interests were surprisingly wide. He knew a number of languages. His native tongues were Russian and Jewish, and later in life he mastered German, and after making America his home he adopted English as his language. He had a reading knowledge of French and could converse and even address an audience in Italian. His ability as a linguist was remarkable. Charles Solomon, one of his early Congressional secretaries says that during one of his summer vacations in Congress London learned French, developing a high degree of pro-

ficiency in the language. He read French classics in the original for diversion and he also read Italian literature in the original.

His chief mental food, however, he absorbed from history and economics. His colleagues in the House of Representatives considered him an authority on the history of American development, political, economic and social. His speeches on the floor of Congress were replete with historic facts and their interpretations, evincing scholarly zeal in collecting and scholarly skill in handling. He was probably the best read man in the House.

Though a leader in a political organization founded on fixed principles and bound by traditions there was not a trace of the partisan in London. His loyalty to Socialism was in effect his loyalty to the downtrodden and to the enslaved. He did many things that the orthodox party member frowned upon and he chafed at many things that the Party expected him to do. Yet nobody, excepting the most fanatically blind, doubted his loyalty and sincerity as a Socialist. Some called him capricious, others thought him imprudent. The true explanation, however, lay in his instinctive honesty, his ever-ready impulse to act according to his conviction.

This explains also a seeming contradiction in London's political activities. He was at times ready to yield and compromise, even glad to recede, while at other times he was immovable as a rock, deaf to all pleas of moderation. His attitude of weakness or firmness was determined by what he considered to be the ultimate aim, the higher good. He did not play up to the galleries; did not think of the immediate effect his action would produce.

And yet London's hold on the affection of the masses never slackened. They knew him to be liberal and unorthodox, wayward at times and on occasions stubborn. But they also knew that he always meant well and that he always sought their good and not his own. They knew that if his judgment was at fault now and then his feelings would be there to guard him and set him right before he strayed from the path.

London's relation to the masses was unique. He never resorted to demagogic methods to win their confidence, he never declared his love for them, never coddled them, never gushed over them. He was more apt to chastise them for their failings. Every old-time labor leader who worked with London in the early years of the labor movement tells of how London used to frown upon the workers at times, often scold them for their lack of courage, for losing heart, for not living up to the highest standard of labor morality. But in spite of that the men knew him to be their most indulgent and whole-hearted friend. Between him and the masses that he taught and led was never a barrier of intellectual superiority or of social remoteness. He loved to meet the people at all hours of the day or night, mingle with them and exchange views with them. After meetings and conferences he would descend from the platform or issue from the council room and enter into long discussions or conversation with any one who cared to join him. His home and business office were always wide open for the more active workers of the union or the Party, to come and go as they pleased. Very often he would drop in at an assembly or a club house or a local room where men gathered, and spend his time conversing with his comrades. He loved it. He loved to identify himself with the people, to lose himself in the mass, to feel about him the presence of the common man.

This bond between himself and the masses was forged in the early years of his career and the passage of time served only to strengthen it. Benjamin Schlesinger, President of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, recalls that as far back as 1903 the union officials and the members of the union used to take extraordinary liberties with London. "He was then engaged as the attorney for our organization. His chief duty was to draw up contracts with employers for a fee of $5 a contract. Some paid only $2. His net income for the season must have been about $200, for we never succeeded in signing up more than ten or fifteen shops. In addition London would handle cases of

delinquent employers and would sue them for non-payment of wages. Whenever a worker would come to the union office with a complaint against his employer we would send him to London. In the course of time the men of the shops found their way to London themselves. They would go to him with all their troubles, even such as had no relation to the shop or the organization. I recall an incident that called forth considerable comment at the time it happened. A worker came to London and lodged a complaint that the employer had beaten him up, not a rare occurrence in those days. After listening to his story London asked, 'And what did you do?' 'Nothing,' replied the man. 'Then get the hell out of here,' shouted London."

London put a high value on personal pride and was impatient with anyone who permitted an insult to pass without retaliation. In many of his talks to the workers he sought to foster in them a sense of dignity and personal worth. In fact he was much more concerned with the soul of a man than with his material welfare, and this too because he put a similar valuation upon his own character. Material welfare was nothing to him in comparison with spiritual and moral dignity.

This deep sense of pride did not interfere with his inordinate modesty. To the end of his days he retained a bashful smile and a child-like chuckle which bespoke youthful genuineness. He hated to hear his praises sung. He once told a friend, "I dislike to be praised to my face. I am glad I won't be able to hear the eulogies over my bier." During his campaigns for office he was averse to personal publicity. He always laid chief emphasis on the Party, the platform, the services he would be able to render if elected.

When London's fiftieth birthday approached, towards the end of December, 1921, the Socialists and the unions together with the hosts of his personal friends organized a fitting celebration. A great mass meeting was held in Lexington Opera House in March, 1922. The Opera House was jammed to the rafters with a vast throng. A long list of speakers representing every phase

of the labor and Socialist movement paid their tribute to him. And while the laudatory speeches were being made London was in the wings back stage, pacing up and down, muttering to himself, "What damn fools, making such a fuss over nothing at all!"

What popularity he gained among his colleagues in the House was due to his force of personality. When he first entered the House the prospects of gaining a foothold in the regard of his colleagues were meager indeed. He came there as a Socialist, an immigrant, an East Sider—thrice marked for ostracism and contempt. But before long he had won for himself the favor of almost all, and the admiration of a group of chosen spirits.

How he achieved this was told by Congressman Warren Worth Bailey of Pennsylvania, a bold warrior for progress and light in the press and on the tribune. This is what Bailey wrote in his own journal after two years of intimate friendship with London in the House. "His sweet reasonableness, his breadth of view, his philosophic grasp of what is the next step have commended him to the membership in a rather striking way." London's nature was a delicate web of poetic dreams and practical sense. He was both a dreamer and a worker. He set himself high, unattainable ideals and labored with all his might to advance towards them. He was an incurable optimist. He never despaired, he was always ready to begin anew. The secret of this ever-living hope lay in his marvelous zest for life and activity. He loved life and work, and life and work to him meant just one thing—to serve mankind, to help humanity to a higher level. Nothing else had real significance to him.

In the last days of his life he spoke seriously of giving up everything else and devoting all his time and energy to the rebuilding of the Socialist and trade union movements that had been weakened by the exigencies of the war and the Communist defection. A Socialist editor who had known him a score of years said that he was one of the most deadly earnest men that ever lived. And he added, "Those who observed him on the platform in a strike, in a political campaign or protesting against

some injustice marveled at his tremendous earnestness. His soul was on his lips, his eyes afire, his body aquiver with anger that such things should be among civilized beings."

His was a conservative nature. What drew him to Socialism was not its program of destruction of the old but its promise of the up-building of the new. Even in his young days, when his blood was afire with rebellion, when the East Side was filled with the cries of revolt echoing from enslaved Russia, London talked and labored for things that would bring joy and relief to the masses of workers. His concern was ever with the constructive side of the movement, with the trade union. And later, when he was transplanted to the political field he carried on his work along the same lines. He never introduced a bill or resolution in Congress merely for its moral effect or as a revolutionary gesture. He planned every measure with an eye to results. Everything he proposed was within the limits of present day realization. And this is true also of the speeches he delivered in Congress. He spoke practical sense; he argued his points from the standpoint of accepted morality and justice, seeking to prove that his ideas and principles were not so extravagant as some of his listeners seemed to think. Furthermore, he was always ready to compromise for practical purposes. The dreamer in him never got the better of the sane thinker.

The deep sincerity of London's nature was revealed also in the code of conduct he adopted for himself in his personal as well as his professional life. That code was modeled after the high principles of revolutionary morality conceived and formulated in the secret groups of Socialist idealists of underground Russia. When the movement was in its inception on the East Side and its leading spirits were young in years and brave in thought these precepts were preached and followed there also. But time worked havoc with them. The spirit of sophistication displaced the old idealistic codes of life.

London was one of the few who remained faithful to the old ideals and methods. This, coupled with his tolerance and his

liberalism, rendered him a puzzle to many an observer. While he was ready to compromise with opponents, to meet them half way in cases of strikes or political battles, he never yielded an iota in matters involving rules of conduct or laws of ethics. He would compromise in practical affairs but would fight to the last ditch when he sensed the danger of lowering the standard of Socialist ethics and working class morality.

One of the old revolutionary principles to which he always remained faithful was to regard the working class as one large family, united in battle against the employing class. He was very careful not to reveal to the enemy the weaknesses of his side, not to give the enemy cause for hope or joy. Thus, whenever dissension broke out in the workers' ranks he did his utmost to keep the fact out of the capitalist press, to keep the fight out of the capitalist courts.

One such instance occurred shortly before his death. The Communists were then trying to capture the Workmen's Circle, of which London was legal counsel as well as spiritual guide. One of the things the Communists did was to carry through a virtual raid upon a large number of Workmen's Circle schools, taking possession of the property and refusing to give it up. The officers of the organization consulted London on the course to be pursued to oust the Communists. Some urged the only method that was sure to bring the desired effect, to apply to the courts for an injunction. London would not hear of it. He admitted the efficacy of such a step but he ruled it out on moral grounds. "I shall not go to court to plead against people of our own class, people who were our comrades but yesterday." He explained that what was happening then in the labor movement was a family affair and must be kept within the family. "Our enemies will put a wrong construction on the whole matter and that must be avoided."

After his death, the press of the country found a subject for editorial sermonizing in his will. The will revealed that London's total worldly effects amounted to not more than $4,000. How

was that possible? He had practiced law for over a quarter of a century and his practice was quite extensive. He had been a Congressman for six years. His reputation was national, even international. He was attorney for the largest Jewish unions during the most prosperous years of their existence, as well as for the large and affluent Workmen's Circle. His personal life was simplicity itself, never a sign of extravagance or luxury in his home, his attire, his amusement—in fact no one ever saw him indulge in any kind of recreation that called for an outlay of money. He was never known to take a vacation, to spend a day without work. His wife and only child lived the same simple life that he did. Where had all his earnings gone?

The people who were intimately acquainted with his life never expected that he would leave a large estate. In his law practice he lived up to ethics much higher, much more rigorous than required by the profession. His code emanated from his Socialist conscience. He once expressed his guiding principle of law practice at a banquet tendered to a young friend who had just entered the profession. He said: "A lawyer should not be in the profession to make money. He should be animated with pity for human beings. He should be the advocate of those who are sorely tried and unfortunate." One of the members of the firm with which he was associated told newspaper men that "London did not want to touch divorce cases for he hated scandal, nor bankruptcy cases, for he thought a man should pay every dollar of his debts if it takes him a lifetime. His cases were mostly of two sorts, wage cases and injunctions. A case involving a workman's $15 wage was just as important to him as an injunction involving 30,000 persons. He would work day and night and when it came to fees he would charge only one-third or one-fourth of the usual sum."

His professional work for trade unions and other working class organizations he regarded as services to the cause and for his ideals, and was therefore honestly averse to receiving payment for it. Every time he could find an excuse for refusing a fee

he did. This reluctance on London's part to be remunerated for legal work done for labor organizations became legendary throughout the Socialist and trade union movement. Every labor leader who had occasion to engage London's services could tell a story of some experience of that kind.

A typical case told by a well known East Side labor leader is the following:

"Our organization had decided to buy a building to house our offices and for meeting purposes. A committee was sent to consult with London. After listening to us he advised against it, declaring that it might involve us in financial difficulties and necessitate the levying of a tax on the members. We discussed and argued and figured for a period of six months and in the end decided against London's opinion. He bowed to our decision and entered upon negotiation to acquire the property. Again he gave most liberally of his time and energy. Our committee would spend days in his office going over every detail of the transaction. Not a single move was made without his knowledge and approval. Finally when the deal had been consummated, our board of directors wrote to London for a bill for his services. We received no answer. We then made out a check for a sum we thought commensurate with his services and dispatched it to him. In a few days the check was returned accompanied by a note protesting that he had acted not as a hired man but as a friend of the organization."

To work gratis for the labor and Socialist movement seemed to have become a source of joy to him. He was deeply pained when some one caught him in the act and tried to force money on him. As counsel for the Workmen's Circle he had to be present at the annual conventions to render his reports on the legal work of the year. Once the officers discovered that he had been "neglecting" to collect traveling expenses and hotel bills. He was warned that if he persisted in this "negligence" he would not be invited to attend future conventions. The officers knew that only drastic measures of this kind would produce results.

The rapid rise of Meyer London from Ghetto obscurity to national fame had a solemnizing effect upon him. The well known sentiment, so often repeated of great men, that they were everything to the people who believed in them and therefore assumed their duties and responsibilities with due humility—this London felt and manifested sincerely. It was remarked by the Socialists with genuine gratification that when he accomplished the impossible in 1914 and broke through the strongest Tammany district on the East Side he did not permit the press to lay stress on the personal element in the campaign. In all the interviews he gave out, in all the stories sent out under his supervision the credit was given to the Socialist Party. He laid stress on the labor movement, on the awakening of the people to a better understanding of politics.

This was no mere pose nor was it due to a lack of appreciation of the large contribution his personality had made to the victory attained, but as a soldier in the army of Socialism, he felt that all that was in him, all of his ability and gifts of personality, belonged to his party. He was a true patriot in the cause he espoused.

Illustrative of this patriotic devotion is a letter he wrote to Mr. Cyrus Sulzberger in response to a personal message of congratulation upon his election in 1914. Mr. Sulzberger is not a Socialist and not an East Sider. He belongs to that wealthy class of German Jews who in the pre-war days looked half askance and half patronizingly upon the immigrant Jews from Russia. His message of congratulation grew out of a personal regard and admiration for London, whom he had learned to know as a result of mutual services in connection with strikes. In his answer London discarded completely the personal element and dwelt on the changed attitude of the American Jews toward the Socialist movement.

He wrote:

"What I desire principally to say to you is that I am impressed with the change of attitude on the part of the leaders of the

American Jewish community towards the representatives of the Socialist movement among the Jews. For a number of years the argument was used on the East Side that the election of a Socialist would result in the shutting of the doors of America to the immigrants. The names of leaders of the Jewish community were mentioned as authority for this. The Jewish immigrant has shown a remarkable capacity for organization and not even the bitterest enemy of immigration can argue that the Jewish worker has reduced the standard of living in America. The organization of the Jewish working people has been the work primarily and almost exclusively of the Socialists."

And while on the subject of letters of congratulation one is tempted to mention a letter which seemed to have gauged accurately the significance of London's first political triumph. This letter was dispatched the very morning after election, November 4, 1914. It read as follows:

"My dear Mr. London: I am delighted to read in the morning papers of your election to Congress. It shows the appreciation of your work by our people, and through it will come a wider appreciation of what you have done and are doing. With every good wish, cordially yours, Louis D. Brandeis." Mr. Brandeis had seen London at work in the council room of the cloakmakers' union. They had collaborated in the drawing up of the famous Protocol, and he was convinced that London's election to Congress would serve as an opportunity for him to reveal his ability, idealism and integrity to a larger audience and upon a higher tribunal.

Significant of the confidence London inspired in men of sound judgment, of lofty idealism, and of revolutionary zeal are three communications received on various occasions from three such men. Who could lay better claim to cool, sound judgment than that scientific genius Charles P. Steinmetz? And who could rival Eugene V. Debs in the purity of his idealism? And who could challenge William D. Haywood in the ardor of his revolutionary spirit? Each one of these men recognized in Lon-

don a soul to be trusted, a light that they could follow.

Steinmetz wrote, April 6, 1917:

"My dear Mr. London:—I have just received an invitation to accept a place on the provisional Board of Directors of the America First Society. The letter of invitation states that you have been asked to accept a place on the Board. I shall be very much obliged if you can let me know by return mail or better still by wire whether you have accepted as I intend to be guided largely by your action. Yours with best regards, Charles P. Steinmetz."

Debs wrote, November 11, 1916:

"My dear Meyer London:—Heartiest congratulations upon your triumphant reëlection, which I hail in common with all your comrades with genuine joy. You will keep the fire alive on the altar of the revolution. I wish you were within arm's reach that I might take you by the hand and express to you in person the pride and satisfaction I feel in your victory. May the gods keep you in health and vigor for the very trying work they have set before you. Your loving comrade, Eugene V. Debs."

Haywood wrote:

"Cook County Jail, September 2, 1918, Meyer London, Dear Comrade: Have just received a copy of your speech on International Socialism and Interallied War Aims. I have not read it yet, but will with pleasure as soon as I get time. In anticipation of a trip to Leavenworth Penitentiary, one that may be of long duration, I have been busily engaged in writing to numerous friends, all of whom I want to remember me while I am in durance vile. When I go, put me on your mailing list, and a personal line will be gratifying. I feel that you will dip your oar any time that you can pull a stroke for us. Yours, W. D. Haywood."

CHAPTER LII

The Gerrymander

London's victory in 1920 against the combined forces of Republican and Democratic parties caused the political leaders of the East Side deep and protound thought. London's further reelection must be prevented at all costs. If it could not be accomplished by the old methods of fraud and violence, if it could not be achieved by the newer methods of fusion, one last but sure plan must be resorted to—London's district must be so mutilated, so butchered that the Socialist voters who lived in it would be scattered and rendered ineffective. This conspiracy to destroy London's district was conceived and planned in secrecy. Very few people, even of the inner circles, were taken into confidence. Bills to gerrymander the East Side congressional districts were quietly smuggled into both Houses of the New York Legislature.

Senator Tolbert, who did the job in the upper House, later admitted that he had no idea of what he was doing. He said:

"I didn't draw the bill. I introduced it after it was drawn up by the Democrats and the Republicans. They both agreed on it. I do not remember who gave it to me. I think it was a messenger. There was no disagreement on the bill. Senator Downing (Democratic leader) and the Republicans were all satisfied with it."

There is one significant fact in connection with the deal. The Constitution of the United States provides that every ten years, following the census, the Congressional districts must be reappor-

tioned. Indeed, the Census is provided for in the Constitution only for that purpose. No action had been taken then, and none has been taken yet to observe the clear and unmistakable provisions of the Constitution following the 1920 census. But in 1922, before any action had been contemplated, out of the 435 districts in the whole country, just one was selected for butchering. Four districts were remade, the 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th of New York, leaving 39 other New York districts intact. No one was in any doubt as to the reason for the redistricting. The only striking feature of the business was the brazenness of it, the open contempt for decency displayed by both old parties working together to get London out of the way.

The bill was introduced on the very last day allowed for introducing legislation. It was not listed in the alphabetic index under the title of "Redistribution of Congressional districts." It came up for a vote in the Assembly at the end of the session in the jam of bills, when the members did not even have the copies of the bills before them. It was rushed through without discussion and without opposition.

When the details of the bill were published in the press it seemed that united public opinion was opposed to it. At the hearing before Governor Miller only one advocate for it made his appearance, a representative of Sam Koenig, chairman of the Republican County Committee. It was opposed by spokesmen of civic organizations, trade unions and the Socialist Party. From remarks dropped by Governor Miller at the hearing, it seemed that his opinion of the bill was the same as its most vehement opponents. He pointed out that the bill was in violation of the Federal Constitution. One of the most influential New York newspapers wrote, "To gerrymander Meyer London out of his district and to make three seats safe for their party, the Republicans in Albany are talking about a Congressional reapportionment. Both purposes are improper. Mr. London does not represent the State, but he does represent the pacifist faction of 46,000 voters in New York and 590,000 voters in the country. He

has won the esteem of the House and is doing no harm there."

In his plea before the Governor, S. John Block, the Socialist spokesman, revealed the sinister motive behind the bill. He proved by population statistics that the claim of its sponsors that the reapportionment was necessary in order to equalize the populations in the four East Side districts was a lie. He showed with figures from the latest Federal Census that the bill would accomplish just the reverse, that it would bring about a wider disproportion in the distribution of the population. The entire population of the four East Side districts amounted to about 725,000. Under the old apportionment London's district counted a population of 165,000; under the proposed districting the population represented would be reduced to 147,000. "The bill gives the 12th district a population far below the average of 181,000, which would be the unit of population for each of the four districts," Block said. "The bill would give the 11th district a population of 62,000 more than the 12th, the 13th district 44,000 more than the 12th, and the 14th district 24,000 more than the 12th. These inequalities are so shockingly apparent that they hardly require any argument to show that the legislature has utterly abused its power and has completely disregarded the Constitution on statutory mandates. The 12th Congressional district has been robbed of a substantial part of the population to which it is legally entitled. Evidently the lawless politicians who planned this outrageous gerrymander and the legislators who, heedless of their duty as public servants, assisted the politicians in their deed left nothing undone in their marauding attack upon the 12th Congressional district."

It seemed that these arguments impressed themselves on the Governor's mind. When the sole defender of the bill appeared before him the Governor questioned him about it.

"Is it not a fact," queried the Governor, "that the populations of the 11th and 12th districts now are about equal and that under the proposed reapportionment there will be a difference of more than 50,000?"

Receiving the frank answer "Yes," the Governor went on: "That does not look very much like observing the requirements that Congressmen be elected from districts as nearly equal in population as practical."

The Governor expressed this sentiment on the 11th of April. Three days later he affixed his signature to the bill and made it a law. Obviously there were considerations other than law and order that weighed heavily with the Executive of the State. The gerrymander was carried through by a Republican Legislature and signed by a Republican Governor, doing the bidding for the Republican machine in lower Manhattan. The Republican Party which supported the Democratic candidate running against London in 1920 now went a step further in its self-sacrificing zeal—it rebuilt the 12th district into a permanent stronghold for Tammany Hall.

A careful calculation of the votes cast in the previous election proved conclusively that the Republican politicians and their Democratic aids did a thoroughgoing job. Thousands of Socialist voters were taken out of the 12th and thrown into the 11th, and in their place London's district was presented with voters from the Bowery lodging houses and from Chinatown and the riverfront, probably the most benighted citizens in the Greater City.

London knew the futility of running in this mangled district. Contemplating the situation from distant Washington he made up his mind to retire at the end of the term and decline to stand for another election. There were other considerations besides the gerrymander of his district which led him to reach this decision. The Socialist Party had been further weakened. It was now feeling the cumulative effect of all the blows aimed at it ever since the fatal year of 1917. The Communist movement was becoming more active in its work, concentrating its effort upon the Jewish labor organizations whence London drew the greater part of his strength. He was also getting tired of crying out alone in the wilderness of Congress, of battling single-handed

against triumphant reaction. He had hoped that his tireless labors in the House in the cause of progress would encourage the masses in other states to emulate his constituents of the East Side and send Socialists or true progressives to join him. He had repeatedly expressed the hope that a nucleus might be created in Congress around which all progressives might gather. Even on the floor of the House he had on several occasions referred to his loneliness.

He communicated his determination not to run again to the Party and to his followers in the labor organizations. In response he was deluged with protests, exhortations and prayers. He was appealed to in the name of the Socialist Party, of the trade unions, of progressive thought and action. He was told that the enemies both from the Right and the Left would hail his retirement as their victory. These admirers of his refused to admit the inevitability of the defeat. London would be elected despite the gerrymander, despite all political intriguing and scheming. They promised to redouble their efforts, to make up with their enthusiasm and application for the votes the reactionary politicians had appropriated from his district.

Typical of these appeals to London is the following letter from one of the vice-presidents of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union:

"Dear brother London: I have been requested by a substantial group of representative workers in the cloak trade to bring whatever influence I have to bear in the matter of your renomination for Congress in the 12th district. I do this not only because of my regard for the wishes of my people but because of my personal esteem for you and my fervent hope that you will not at this time refuse to bear the standard of the workers of the city of New York. I have no doubt that you are aware of the great love that our cloakmakers have for you. I also suppose that you know of their faith in your ability to represent their interest and of their keen appreciation of your work in the past. It is, however, because of these elements that they are more than re-

luctant to relinquish the advantage that has been theirs because of your public service. You who have worked with us in the dark days and have led our forces in striking for the light cannot at this time withdraw your leadership. With the first whispered rumor that you intended to decline, our labor groups felt that they had been dealt a serious blow. Everywhere one comes in contact with the sentiments that all obstacles must be brushed aside and under no circumstances must you be permitted to decline to represent our workers in Congress for the coming term."

London yielded. Discussing the question with his wife he told her that he had not the heart to disappoint "the boys." He was not for a moment deceived as to the outcome. He knew that the votes taken from him by the politicians in Albany were beyond redemption and that without them reëlection was an impossibility. If he retired now he would have been spared the efforts of a strenuous campaign and would also be spared the humiliation of defeat. Against all these practical considerations stood the wishes and feelings of the men who had been blinded by their love and enthusiasm for him. What would they think of him? How would they feel about him? These questions were constantly in his mind. For a while he hoped to be able to cool the ardor of these enthusiasts. He spoke to them, argued with them, but in this he did not succeed. He bowed to their wishes and accepted the nomination.

At first the other two parties put their reliance on the gerrymander. But realizing London's strength, they thought the better of it and at the last minute the Republicans withdrew their candidate and threw their support to the Democratic ticket. On the one side was London, weakened by the gerrymander; on the other side was the Democratic candidate, strengthened by the Republican fusion. The result was inevitable. London was defeated.

CHAPTER LIII

The End of a Noble Life

The last three years of London's life marked the darkest period in the desperate struggle of the Socialists to maintain themselves against the Communist elements. The Socialists suffered reverses in the unions that they had founded and fostered and cherished for over three decades. Fate so willed it that the severest setbacks occurred in those two organizations that had been inextricably bound up with London's name from the day of their birth. London saw the cloakmakers' union and the furriers' union pass from the influence of the Socialists into the hands of the Communists.

These were sad years indeed for the man who had given his life to educate and organize the Jewish working masses, to follow the teachings of social democracy. Always he had laid the greatest stress upon enlightenment, understanding, humaneness, and the workers had accepted his teachings and put their trust and confidence in his guidance. But now it seemed that they had forsaken him and repudiated his principles. They lent their ears to Communist prophets who preached immediate revolution and promised the early establishment of a Soviet order. All efforts of the Socialists to stem the tide in the direction of communistic leadership were of no avail. Upraised in their hands these prophets of the revolution carried the star of Russian triumph, of the first proletarian government, and this seemed to charm and fascinate the masses.

In order to clear their path for lasting triumph the Communists employed against the Socialists the same weapons that had proven

so effective in Russia—the weapon of propaganda. The Socialists were vilified and slandered. They were denounced as traitors and spies, as agents of the employers, as hirelings of the capitalist class. The campaign of propaganda observed no limits of decency or fairness. Men who had given their all to the cause of labor were pilloried in the Communist press as thieves and traitors. The fairest names upon the records of the labor movement were attacked.

London was back in New York when the onslaught against the Socialists was in full swing. He saw the two trade union organizations so dear to his heart succumb to the confusion. He saw the edifice of Socialist-led labor unions that he had helped to rear crumble under the blows of Communists attacks.

As much as he could do to beat back the assailants London did. He met the Communists in open battle at conventions of labor organizations. He was one of the leaders of the Old Guard that definitely defeated the Communists at the crucial convention of the Workmen's Circle—a defeat that destroyed the Communists' hope of capturing that organization and its treasury and that probably marked the turning of the tide in the desperate war between Communists and Socialists.

During these last two years London gave most of his time to his private affairs and to his home. There was little that he could do for the Socialist Party and for the labor movement. He was not happy in his enforced retirement. His mind and heart were in the glorious past and in the hopeful future. He considered the present as an interval of forced rest which he sincerely believed would soon pass. His innate optimism did not permit him to despair. He did not lose faith in the sound judgment, in the sane reason of the masses. He had seen them swayed by illusions many times before and he had seen them restored to the right path. Why the virus of rebellion had been more insistent this time could be easily explained—the war, the Russian revolution, the ups and downs in the economic situation in the needle trades, all conspired to produce the effect.

But while the period of illusion might be prolonged, and convalescence a slow and painful process, recovery must come in the end. Of this London was certain and he yearned for the time when he would be called to plunge into the work of reconstruction, of restoring the structure of that labor movement that had been so ruthlessly destroyed.

This hope of London's was not to be fulfilled. Death came to claim him long before the war in the labor movement reached a decisive point.

Meyer London met his death on Sunday, June 6, 1926. About eleven o'clock in the morning he left his home in the company of his wife, intending to stroll to Stuyvesant Park in the vicinity and there spend a little while reading a volume of Chekhov's short stories that he had put in his pocket. As he was crossing Second Avenue at 15th Street he was caught in the heavy automobile traffic passing both ways. He became confused and when he halted he was struck by a car. He was picked up and hurried to Bellevue Hospital. There it was found that he had been severely injured internally. For about eleven hours physicians labored to save his life, but their efforts were in vain. He died at ten o'clock that night, surrounded by his wife, his daughter, his two brothers and a host of friends and admirers. Before he lost consciousness he requested that no charge be brought against the driver of the car that had struck him.

The demonstration of grief at the sudden death of "the most beloved man of the East Side" has never been paralleled within the memory of the oldest inhabitants of the city of New York. The mourning began as soon as the news spread late Sunday night. Immediately groups of people began to gather in front of the hospital building, in front of London's last home, and about the building of the *Jewish Daily Forward*. All through the night inquiries regarding the rumors about London poured into the offices of the Socialist organizations and newspapers. The telephones rang incessantly. People came in person, "Is it true? Is it true?" they fearfully inquired.

The morning newspapers of the city featured the story of London's death as the most important news of the day. His body had been removed to his residence, a small apartment on East 18th Street. Immediately the house was besieged by hundreds of people who came to pay their last tribute to the man who had been so dear to them. The doors were open to them and all through the day and night a line of grief-stricken people passed the bier. They represented all strata of society. Some had served with him in public life, others had followed his leadership in labor difficulties, others had learned the meaning of Socialism from his lips or had cheered his words years before when he demanded in street corner speeches that the rights of the workers be recognized.

The following day his body was taken to the *Forward* Building on East Broadway. Thousands of people crowded the great square facing the building. The body was placed in a large hall, and all through the afternoon until midnight the procession around the bier continued unbroken. To quote from the *Times* of that day: "25,000 men, women and children, some of whom stood in line for almost an hour, passed his coffin from the time the body arrived in the afternoon until the building was closed, about midnight. Women carrying babies in their arms, small boys who lifted their smaller companions so that they might view the features of their former Congressman, bearded men who plodded up the stairway with the aid of their canes, men in working attire on the way home after a day's labor, women in sweaters and shawls and men and women in modern attire—all were represented among the mourners. Many wept openly as they passed from the building."

Late in the afternoon groups of young boys and girls arrived and took their places in line with the grown-ups. They explained that they had been sent by their school teachers to honor the memory of Meyer London.

The funeral that took place on Wednesday, June 10, was perhaps the most striking pageant of sorrow that New York had

ever seen. The police authorities estimated the number of mourners at about half a million. As one newspaper put it: "For six hours the East Side put aside its duties, pressing or trivial, to do honor to its dead prophet." The funeral ceremonies began with orations delivered by prominent Socialists and trade union leaders at the bier in *Forward* Hall. The hall was crowded far above its capacity. Out in the street many thousands more listened, the addresses being carried to them through amplifiers. This was followed by a procession through the East Side streets, the line stretching from the *Forward* Building on East Broadway to the London home on East 18th Street, a distance of about two miles. The body was followed by 50,000 men, women and children of varying ages, nationalities, religions and social positions. The streets were lined with hundreds of thousands—in windows and fire-escapes, doorways and stairways, the watchers stood, while sidewalks were jammed six deep.

Again to quote from the *Times*:

"Attempts to maintain an orderly marching file four abreast proved fruitless, hundreds of the watchers joining the marchers at intervals. When the cortège reached Second Avenue the ranks were twelve abreast. Thousands of others followed on the sidewalks along the entire route of the march. It seemed as if every organized labor body in the city was represented in the line, bakers, actors, necktie makers and every type of needle-worker carried signs of their union, and members of the Workmen's Circle, the Socialist Party and other parties with which Mr. London was associated marched in groups."

In its mourning for London the East Side forgot its differences in religion, social classes and political parties; tears were shed by all, by orthodox as well as free-thinkers, by conservatives as well as radicals, by rich as well as poor. Even those who had fought London and libeled him in his political campaigns and in the many struggles between capital and labor now confessed their admiration for the man. Many of his political enemies joined in the funeral procession and sent messages of condolence to the

family. Rabbis of synagogues who were aware of London's agnosticism prayed for his soul.

For many days after the funeral the *Jewish Daily Forward* published long columns of resolutions of mourning passed by organizations of workers and progressives all over the country—trade unions, political clubs, philanthropic societies, fraternal and social bodies, students' organizations, educational societies and many others.

Meyer London's death and funeral served as a subject for leading editorials in newspapers all over the country. The old wartime hostility to the lone Socialist Congressman had cooled. The final estimate of London made by the American press was based upon the sterling qualities of his character, his great ability and his service to humanity. The few extracts from the editorial columns in some of the most prominent journals quoted below are representative of sentiment voiced by the entire press.

> *Baltimore Sun*—Fatally injured by an automobile in New York City, the first request made by Meyer London on his way to the hospital was that no charge be made against the driver of the car that struck him. The thought was characteristic of the man. No personal suffering, no pressure of work, no private duties, were ever sufficient to stifle the kindly sentiments towards his fellows which always animated this Socialist leader. The brilliancy of Mr. London's mind was as pronounced as the humanitarianism which had its well-springs in his heart. It has been acknowledged as readily by his colleagues in the House of Representatives where he served three terms as by the East Side garment workers in whose behalf he time and again contributed legal talent far above the ordinary.
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> *Rochester Times-Union*—There are not more than two or three men in all New York City who may expect at their death to be followed by a procession of 50,000 mourners between sidewalks black with massed humanity. The richest man in New York could not command this tribute, nor the most famous Broadwayite. This unusual spectacle in the city of the unusual was in honor of ex-Congressman Meyer

London, a Jew, a Socialist, a champion and friend of his East Side people.

New York Herald Tribune—No one, not even his political adversaries in the House, questioned for a moment his sincerity and good intentions. He devoted his life to the betterment of his fellow-men. He might have chosen a wiser political course in the noble endeavor, however, . . . and its (the country's) institutions are not in peril as long as minority political parties choose such practical men as London to represent them in legislative bodies. The death of Meyer London removes from the Socialist Party of which he was a life-long member one of its principal and sanest spokesmen.

The New York World—His ceaseless activity, his sympathy, his high ideals, made him popular. As a Socialist Congressman he disappointed many of his extremer constituents. He was too practical-minded. He was fearless in maintaining his convictions.

Among the many personal messages of grief and mourning that came from people of prominence that of Eugene V. Debs was probably the most touching. He wrote:

The tragic and premature death of Meyer London is a heavy blow to his family and to the great many comrades throughout the land, and is a great loss to the Socialist and labor movement. The horrible news came to me as a flash of lightning out of a clear sky. I feel so shocked that I cannot imagine that such a catastrophe has struck us, robbing us forever of one of the most brilliant minds, one of the truest hearts and one of the finest and noblest souls that have ever devoted themselves to the cause of the poor and needy, the oppressed and exploited in their struggle to climb out of darkness into daylight. More than thirty years have I known, highly regarded and respected the comrade who has fallen in the very midst of his noble life and who now lies shrouded in the black clothes of death. Meyer London was in the truest sense of the term a man possessed of self-respect. He was endowed with all the qualities which make for a noble and worthy character and at the same time he had the soft heart, devoted sympathy and the loving sympathy of a

mother. With the utmost courage, with the most absolute devotion and loyalty he carried out all his duties to the Socialist Party and to the labor unions. In the history of the labor movement London's name will be written in letters of gold and will be read many, many years after.

And to London's widow Debs sent the following words:

Mrs. Meyer London, My dear comrade:—Please allow me as one of the innumerable admirers and lovers of your noble husband to tender the deepest sympathy of Mrs. Debs and myself and all our family in this hour of your cruel and heart-breaking bereavement. The sad news shocked us beyond words and it seems impossible for us to realize it that Meyer London, the high-souled, generous-hearted comrade we all loved, has passed from amongst us to the great beyond. Words are too feeble to express what is in our hearts as we contemplate this cruel, crushing blow to you and your family and this irreparable loss to us all and the whole world. But we would at least have you know that our hearts are with you in this agonizing hour, and that if we but could we would gladly share with you the burden of your sorrow and bereavement. You at least have the comfort of knowing that your beloved husband commanded the respect of everyone who came in contact with him and that he had the affectionate devotion of every comrade who ever came to know his true worth. His character was manly, upright, without reproach, and his name and memory will be cherished not only by his comrades of his day but by generations of comrades that are yet unborn.